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In the shadows

In my life, I have always been compared to my older sister, Peyton. She is an honor roll student who is also on varsity soccer. All my life, I have been living in her shadow, wanting to be seen and heard. The competition between us began at a very young age. My parents always praised her for the good things she'd done, but I wasn't good enough for any sort of recognition. I always tried to go above and beyond to get the attention of my parents, but nothing could turn their eyes. I began to try in sports thinking that they might see how great I was. At home, conversations were limited for me, since my parents wanted to waste their whole breath on my sister. It takes a toll on people, especially at the age I was at. I started to pick up extra hobbies to help me get away from the toxic household. When I asked for things my parents slightly turned me down. They would get Peyton so many new things, and me they just left me in the dust. My grandma always noticed Peyton's praise and made sure to share some of it with me.

Even as we got older, the challenge still remained. With my sister having a 4.0 gpa, it beat my 2.8 gpa any day. Having this be my situation, it did sort of fuel my fire. I used the hurt and brokenness that I felt to push me to lengths she reached. I began really trying in school. I tried so hard I got the grades my parents always expected of me. I still remember the first time my dad told me he was proud of me, and I did a good job. That started my ignition to do more. I was addicted to the way that being praised felt. I love it so much that it made me want to try, something I had never felt before. The more they showed me that they cared, the more I wanted to give them reason to. I think that from growing up being in the shadows of my older sister, I've

learned some things about myself and about my family. You are a disgrace if not successful. It's a hard truth for me to swallow since I believe parents should be parents to their kids regardless of the grades and the extra-curriculars they partake in. I've learned that it's okay to not be the best at things, but it's not okay to not try.

Effort is really something I've always lacked. It's not necessarily the finished product, but merely the steps you take and choices you make on the way. The minute you show that you care about being successful is when you will start to get recognized. The way my parents treated my sister was not a realistic thing. I didn't know at the time that she was so above and beyond and that shouldn't tear down my dreams of being just great. I can be successful and not be my sister. I've thought this whole time that perfect is what was expected of me, but that's not the truth. The truth is that effort and passing is perfect in my book. I am going to be successful in life, even if that doesn't mean extraordinary. The more that I try, the more I feel things I never felt as a kid.

As a society, comparing can kill. With social media being such a big part of our lives, it is important to remember that no one is the same, and nothing is ever as it seems. The best thing I've taken from this life long battle I've had is that individually, we all matter. Just because a celebrity is making millions with brand deals and marketing doesn't mean that our small town jobs and lives aren't just as great and important. Forgetting that you make a difference even if no one notices will kill your peace. Stay in your own lane because you are your own person, and no one can take your uniqueness away.