

A Letter to My Parents

Dear Mom and Dad,

I hope you never read this. Even though we are an affectionate family, sharing feelings is not easy for us. I have so many things I want to tell you guys, so many things I want to say, but I am too cowardly to say it to your face. This letter contains some of the thoughts I am too scared to share with you, but maybe the act of writing it will give me the courage to express how I feel.

Dad, it must have been difficult, growing up in a rural village in 1970s India. From what you have told me, you were a sensitive and shy boy growing up in a culture saturated with toxic masculinity. You were bullied, so, inculcated with the societal ideals of what a man should be, you searched for ways to earn the respect of others. You attempted to harden yourself against insults, becoming closed off and supercilious in the process. You did not want to show anyone your soft underbelly. You did not feel comfortable truly confiding in anyone, and I can only imagine how lonely you must have felt.

Dad, I wish you could be vulnerable with someone, anyone. You keep everything to yourself. There is so much going on below the surface that you never talk about. You may not want to feel certain emotions, but I know you do. You do not know what to do with your feelings of isolation and depression, which can lead to frustration. Maybe, if you were able to express your emotions, you would be happier. And, honestly, that is all I want to see—you truly happy.

Mom, I wish you were not in so much pain. You, like Dad, feel all alone in the world, and I wish you could talk to each other about those feelings. I worry about you sometimes. I have seen the suicide notes, the ones where you ask God to just let you die already. I initially reacted with anger, wondering how you even consider the possibility leaving me alone. I know now that it was never about me, that you never meant to hurt me. You were just in so much pain, and you

needed a way out. I know you still feel that pain, and I wish I could do something about it. I wish you did not feel as if your life was directionless and pointless, because I need you. I will always need you, even as I try to establish my own identity. I hope you know that.

That being said, Mom, I cannot be your reason for existence. I cannot handle that kind of pressure. I wish you had a support system outside of our immediate family, someone you trusted and could talk to. I cannot be your best friend; I cannot take on all of your sadness. I know it is selfish of me, but I cannot always be there for you. I'm sorry.

Mom and Dad, I sometimes wish you were different people. I sometimes wish you were different people, because I sometimes wish I was a different person. I have blamed you for my social awkwardness and diffidence. I have blamed you for my anger and my arrogance born out of insecurity. I have blamed you for my difficulties with relationships and with my weight. That is not fair to either of you though. I am past the age where I can continue to blame you for my issues, and it is up to me to work on them.

Besides, if I am going to blame you for my failings, I also have to acknowledge everything you have given me. Dad, you taught me how to think critically about myself and the world, and I have inherited your dark sense of humor. Mom, you have shown me how to be loving and considerate, and I admire how selfless you can be. You have influenced the person I am today, and, in spite of how flawed I am, you both still love me. Thank you for that.

Mom and Dad, I love you. I know I say it when you guys call me everyday, but I need to let you both know that I love you as you are. Yes, I get frustrated with you all (as I am sure you do with me), and, yes, I want you to recognize that you have issues that you need to address. But I say that because I care, because it hurts me to know that you two feel so isolated and burnt out. I just want you both to be happy. Maybe someday, I can get this message across to you, but, for

now, just know that I love you and am grateful for everything you have given me. For what it is worth, you guys can be pretty cool.

Sincerely,

Your Daughter