

Transcript:

Student Project #1: Core Stories

At the beginning of this class, I didn't believe core stories were a real thing. I couldn't wrap my head around the fact that only certain moments in our lives change the course of our existence forever. And in a way, I still believe that. I have always been a strong advocate for the butterfly effect. The butterfly effect says that every decision we make has led us to where we are right now. That the choice to have pancakes over French toast on November 18th of 2011 has somehow led me to be in this class on April 10th, 2018.

The point being, I thought that every tiny choice we've made has impacted my life, not just a couple major ones. But the more I thought about it, the more I began to understand the depth of change some of the decisions have made on my life. I realized I may have a few more core stories than I originally thought. I still believe that having French toast back in 2011 has caused a disruption in my life today, but it wouldn't be nearly as big as other decisions I made later on in life. The more I understand the choices I made, the more I realize how interconnected they are.

My first core story happened when I was in fifth grade. It was just a few years after one of my best friends had left to move to Texas. We had been best friends since preschool, and were practically inseparable. We did everything together; we went to school, went to church, played sports, and hung out all the time. But shortly after the 3rd grade got done, Taylor moved away to Texas. She was my go-to girl, and now I had no one.

After she left, I was forced to face the fourth and fifth grade by myself, but I didn't know how to do it. Although I had other friends, it was hard to do it without her. When the end of the fifth grade came near, I realized I didn't want to go to middle school with any of the kids I had gone to elementary school with. But then a proposition was laid before me. I could either attend the middle school that all of the rest of the kids from my elementary school were going to, or I could go to the middle school my mom worked at across town. Although this meant leaving behind everyone I ever knew and join a school where I knew literally one person. To fifth-grade me, this was the biggest decision of my life. But at the end of the day, I knew nothing at my old school was holding me back. There was no reason why I shouldn't give it a try. **At the time, I didn't realize how much this decision would impact my life, but it ended up being one that changed my life forever. My new school gave me opportunities that I never thought were possible.**

This leads me to my next core story. The beginning of the sixth grade was rough; I had only known one girl out of the entire school. And although I thought she was nice, I didn't have the same friendship I had with Taylor. It wasn't until a few months into the school year that everything changed. It was finally basketball season, and like always, my dad was putting together a team. But this time, we were on the opposite side of town with a whole new set of girls. This meant a whole new team. It was a couple of girls on this team that gave me my bestest friends until high school. From the first day of practice on, I had found three new friends, ones that I would keep for a long, long time. It was this decision to do basketball that changed my course for middle school, and gave me a good foundation for years to come. And although middle school started off a little rough, the next three years were more than I could ever ask for, and more than I could ever think imaginable.

My next core story is a little different than the rest. It took place in ninth grade when I was at a church youth group. It was some sort of girl's night, and we decided to go to a presentation at our local

library. The whole presentation was on why we judge each other. It was never really a topic that I discussed much or thought about, but it fascinated me immensely. It discussed how we should think when we first notice things about people, and instead of quickly judging them, how we should try and see where they're coming from. The whole point of the presentation was that we don't know what backgrounds people come from, and how we can never judge a book by its cover.

And although this seems like simple advice, ninth-grade me was blown out of the park. I learned that the first thought you have in a situation is what you were trained to think, because of our environment and how we grew up, but the second thought it really defines us. This presentation was key to how I looked at the world from now on. I thought before I judged people, and overall, I was just a happier person. Going to this presentation changed my life for the better.

My last core story was most recent, and also the easiest for me to see; it was my decision to come to MSU. My choice of colleges came down to two: a small Christian college in Grand Rapids, and the eighth-biggest university in the country. These were two wildly different choices, but it was really hard for me to make. I was terrified to go to a university where 50,000 other students were going, but at the end of the day, I knew I wasn't going to be happy at a tiny college that didn't even have a football team. I knew enrolling in a residential college within the university would make it seem a lot smaller, and it did. My decision to come to MSU was one that I'll never regret.

Words can't explain how happy I've been here the last eight months. The group of friends that I have here are absolutely amazing. They are the funniest group of people I have ever met, and I couldn't imagine living in a world without them. They get me through the stressful weeks of exams and papers, and we party-it-up with Trivial Pursuit on the weekends. You won't find a bigger group of nerds, but they're my nerds, and I wouldn't trade them for anything. Today, I am a freshman at Michigan State who wants to become a high school history teacher. There are many more stories in my life that have led me to where I am today, but the four I told you are the major ones. **Three out of the four of my stories are related to the relationships I had with those around me, and that isn't just a coincidence.**

Yes, I've been calling these *my* core stories, but that doesn't mean they aren't other people's as well. To me, our defining moments in our life happen due to other people. We are shaped by our best friends, but also complete strangers. In order to get the most out of every interaction you have, you have to be able to listen. Listening has always been hard for me, especially in conversations I don't necessarily want to be in. I tend to lose track of what the person is saying, or my mind just completely blocks them out and goes on its own tangent. It's difficult to interact with people when you make it so hard on yourself. *Person speaking to her in video: "Hey, did you get that" *nods* - (No).* **Paying attention to people is important. In fact, I believe it's one of the most important things you do in your lifetime. As humans, we have a variety of sources to learn from, but the most crucial is those around us. It can be hard to listen sometimes, but you'll never regret it.**