Many people picture others with mental disorders as people who cannot function in society, outcasts, and loners. The truth is that mental illnesses are more common than people think, and many don’t fit the image above. My grandma Kelsey won’t have fit into the mold she was a working women with a great family, and adorable pets. I remember as little kid always looking forward to going to grandma’s house because of her ability to tell stories.

When I was in the 4th grade my grandma came to live with us and I remember being excited at the idea of spending more time with her. I thought of how exciting it would be on weekends to listen to rock music such as Queen her personal favorite, and play with all the knickknacks such as her beautiful music boxes and the numerous ragdolls she had. However, her time spent with us wasn’t all sunshine and rainbows, but filled with arguments with my mom about little things. Such as the amount of money my mom spent on me, the food that my mom and I liked, or the type of movies we watched. I remember one instance in which she had a argument with my mom because I didn’t hear her say if I could pass the rice at dinner. She was convinced that my failure to hear her was deliberate, and that I had something against her. My grandma went on to criticize me, and told my mom that I simply didn’t want her to have any of the rice. Nobody understood what caused her mood swings, and irrational thinking. Our family began to walk on eggshells worried about what would set her off next. One night after a particularly awful argument about the fact that my mom didn’t like the spaghetti my grandma made I heard my grandma say to my mom “I know the problem is me”. I remember thinking how troubling it must be to know that you’re the one with the problem, and not knowing what the problem is. I also remember distinctly thinking if she knows it's her why can’t she control it.

It wasn’t even a year after she started living with us that she moved out. It sounds awful to say but I was glad because I didn’t have to worry about her mood swings. It is only until later that I learned she was mentally ill. She had a mental illness called Borderline Personality Disorder which causes people to frantically avoid real or perceived abandonment. Obviously, that is just a tiny piece of the disorder. When she was diagnosed it helped me piece together why she was so unstable. Even though she knew it was her since it was a mental illness she couldn’t just switch it on and off like a lightswitch. It is fair to say I love my grandma, and if she was committed to treatment I would be interested in rebuilding our relationship. I believe that mental health is extremely important, and mental illness do not deserve to be stigmatized because they have families who are also impacted by their disorder. My experience has taught me to be more empathetic because I knowmy family is just one of the many families who are affected by the disorder.