***Let’s Talk: About Perfectionism!***

By: Almetrice Shavers

So, I know I’m not the only one that has dealt with being a perfectionist. We should really start a recovery group for this lol. I can only talk about my experience. I have dealt with this since I was in adolescent years and it intensified into my adulthood. Where do I even begin? From elementary school always making the honor roll and having perfect attendance. Without saying it, trying to be best behaved child in the classroom. At each parent teacher conference, I never worried about getting in trouble. My teachers just raved about how sweet and smart I was from 1st grade to 5th grade. Back then, it was easy to be good. I always wanted to make my parents proud. At that age no major pressure is on you yet. I started going through puberty at 8 years old and by 10 years old I started my cycle. So I felt mature compared to some of my classmates. My daddy told me I was becoming a woman and I took it to heart lol. By middle school a shift happens, not sure what exactly it is. It maybe the hormones I believe. Being that sweet little girl is starting to look differently. I head to jr. high for 7th and 8th grade, full blown hormones are in tack now. I’m still trying to hold on to my good girl persona.

Now I didn’t mention in the beginning of this, that I am a preacher’s kid. If you know, then you already know about that subject. If not, let me tell you a little about what comes with this life. If feels like you are born with a huge mirror on you all the time. Almost like a microscope or magnifying glass for example. My father has been a preacher since I was 4 or 5 years old. I didn’t really start feeling the impact of until I got older. You are viewed in a different light than other children. You are always told how to act and how to do things. Then if we do, do something then it is blown out of proportion. I can honestly say that this pressure didn’t come from my parents. It actually came from the people in the church. I can remember hearing people say, Allie you’re the pastor’s daughter and you don’t need to behave in this manner. Or you don’t want to embarrass your parents. For the longest, I never felt like I could be like the other kids. I wanted to do the same things and even behave but I couldn’t. Now I said I would let you all in on my journey. I was going into the summer before my senior year of high school and I finally lost my virginity. Just really trying to process everything and I finally wanted to see what all the hype was about. It was good experience, just a little painful lol. So my closest friends knew about it. I believe some people were suspecting I was having sex, when I actually wasn’t at all. Make a long story short, a lady from my church was asking the other teens about me and what I was doing. She cornered someone and they stated they guess I was, but he didn’t even really know. She pretty much blackmailed me into telling my parents about it. When I asked her why, she stated your father is the pastor and he doesn’t need to find out from other people. Being young and dumb I said okay. If I knew then, what I knew now I wouldn’t have admitted to it. The disappointment in my parent’s face is something, i’ll never forget. I felt very shameful and dirty, all I could do was cry and tell them how sorry I was.

High school is so trying and that being a good girl wore off of me. I got tired of being nice all the time and I honestly had some anger issues that were unresolved. (I’ll talk about that in another post.) I started lashing out at peers and teachers, grades started slipping and I even had my first fight with a guy. (He and I were able to laugh about it later.) It’s so much chaos happening and I am not knowing where I even fit in. High school to me, feels like sink or swim. I just coasted through it. The perfectionism is still in me, but it’s hard to maintain. I’m trying hard to hold on to it. My older sister got pregnant at 16 and oh boy, did that unleash the hell hounds on me. Music, journaling and poetry truly became my outlets in high school. Just learning to coast through it all. I switched schools my sophomore year and that was alot to digest. I had went to the Arkansas schools from 1st grade up until 1st semester of 10th grade. It was all I knew. I grew up with the same kids all my life. I knew the environment. When I moved to Liberty-Eylau, that’s when it got real. My grades dropped and I was playing catch up because it was different states and different curriculum. That was a different type of pressure and that perfectionist in me coming to the surface. I had never received C’s before and that was crushing to my soul. My parents were very understanding, but I couldn’t handle it. I was disappointed in myself more than anything. That high school was different and peer pressure was definitely magnified here. By my senior year I started rebelling hard. I’m not proud of it, but being sneaky became fun and easy to do. Being in a chokehold for so long and someone always telling you what not to do, comes with negative behaviors. I think I was grounded most of my senior year, but I survived and graduated.

I stayed home my first two years and went to the community college in Texarkana. At first I didn’t like the idea, truthfully I just wanted to be free. Now looking back, I wouldn’t trade it for anything. I reconnected with old friends and met some amazing people. When I turned 18, my parents allowed me more freedom and I got a car. For me, that was winning the jackpot. College was a new level and trying to learn to navigate young adulthood is not for the weak. Making sure you get to class, keeping up with the assignments, trying to keep a social life and working a part time job was a juggle. At 18, I was a little naive and gullible. I had been sheltered so much, so life lessons had to teach me a few things. I lost my scholarship after my freshman year and had to pay for my sophomore year out of pocket. Yet, another disappointment in myself. I was shy a few points on my gpa to keep my scholarship. My parents already told me that if I lost my scholarship, it would be on me to pay if I wanted to continue. At the time it seemed harsh, but i’m grateful because it taught me accountability. Then I transferred to Henderson State and I thought I had everything figured out. That was clearly not it. After my first semester I was on academic probation. My gpa was so low I was beyond embarrassed. Having to come home for the summer and tell my parents how poorly I did was a different type of pressure. They didn’t fuss at me, just told me they knew I was capable but I had to put in the work. I put alot of pressure on myself because the degree wasn’t just for me but for my parents as well. I did graduate though after pushing myself.

Okay i’m going to wrap this up because I could literally write a book about all of this. The perfectionist trailed me in college, graduate school and even in parenting. Being in therapy the last two years, I am learning how to recognize it and stopping myself. I know being perfect is not even realistic and a negative trait to have. I am learning to give myself grace when I start feeling a way. I give myself permission to embrace the good and negative in the situations. It has taken me a long time to get here, but I’m thankful what I have had to endure in my past. I made a vow to not put that type of pressure on my daughter. It takes away from a person. It causes unnecessary anxiety, stress and unhappiness. Almost as if you can’t ever do things right. Let’s learn to live life and enjoy it without worrying about what others have to say. If no one has told you, you deserve God’s grace, love and peace. Love you guys!!