

**Emphasize**  
Pause After

**A Pain Tolerance Destroyed:** A young girl rediscovers how strong she is while going through chronic stomach pain her sophomore year of high school.

- **When** I was little my family would always joke around that I had no pain tolerance, not a low pain tolerance, but nothing at all.
- **Honestly**, looking back I can see why. I mean there was one time I stubbed my toe on our green coach in the basement and my mom heard my scream and came running **from all the way upstairs**.
- **And yes**, I actually remember this happening because to me, the pain was excruciating.
- **Not** only did I have no pain tolerance, but I was, and still am, very clumsy. I mean, my first real injury was when I broke my back, walking.
- I may or may not have done a cartoon style flip because our wood floors had just been cleaned and were slightly slippery.
- **All** of this meant that as a kid all my frequent injuries were pretty overwhelming for my mom, whether they were serious or not.
- **Even** though I was never the best at handling pain, I learned to control my emotions a little bit, broken bones I could deal with, the occasional paper cut-**sure**, but the one thing I always hated was throwing up.
- **Not** that anyone really enjoys throwing up but I really hated it and for good reason.
- **When** I was in middle school I was just hanging out with friends, eating mozzarella sticks, as one does.
- **Of** course, the cheese from the mozzarella stick got stuck in my throat and I started to choke.

- **Now keep in mind,** although my friends took my injuries more seriously than my parents because I had learned to control my emotions a bit, I still got hurt a lot and therefore they knew I could handle myself when I did.
- **It** took a little while this time for them to realize I couldn't do this one alone, basically till I turned purple.
- **Now** I'll spare everyone the gory details, but basically I made it through.
- **All** of this made me hate the feeling of gagging so if I ever felt nauseous, well it didn't end well.
- **The** good news was, that rarely happened to me, until the summer before my sophomore year of high school.
- **On** the plane ride back from a family trip to Spain, right when the plane started to land, I felt nauseous for the first time in almost five years.
- **Trapped** in my seat, I of course started to internally panic and was the first to rush to the bathroom when I could get inside the airport.
- **I** sat there for almost 40 minutes waiting for the inevitable while my family waited outside and it took them literally coming in and telling me we needed to leave for me to realize I would simply need to live with the nausea until something happened.
- **Surprisingly,** nothing ever did and I didn't think much of the issue until the first day back at school.
- **Suddenly,** I was feeling nauseous every day and getting unbelievable stomach cramps and pain constantly.
- **I** told my mom and we decided to visit a doctor.
- **I** remember being nervous to see what I thought of a grown up doctor.
- **Of** course, I had been to doctors for broken bones, the flu, but never something so uncertain and scary.

- **After** a quick 5 minute exam, this doctor who had started the appointment with such niceties quickly told me there was no way I was sick and my pain was most likely coming from anxiety.
- **I'll** give her the benefit of the doubt, she didn't say it **that** harshly, but she did blame my pain on anxiety and when you are confused and the one person who you feel should fix this confusion makes you feel more terrible, it feels that harsh.
- **Now**, I want to be very clear: I don't blame my mom and dad for believing the doctor, she was a doctor and she pretended to care very well.
- **The** problem was, this left me fighting for myself alone, with nobody really believing me and honestly sometimes I didn't even believe in myself.
- **When** you have been marked as someone with no pain tolerance for so long, you start to question if this feeling of incredible pain is real or just a personal embellishment.
- I decided to stay silent, learn to live with pain, and see what would happen.
- **Of** course, it just got worse, and I made a conscious choice to fight for myself to get the medical care I needed.
- **It** took one conversation with my parents, and although they didn't really believe the amount of pain I was in, we decided a second opinion couldn't hurt.
- **What's** funny about having a chronic illness is that nobody tells you how accustomed to pain you get, and the coupled pain tolerance that coincides.
- **They** also don't warn you, that no matter how many people are in your corner, which 6 months into testing my parents finally were, you will always feel alone.
- **There** is no greater isolation than feeling your body is not in your control.
- **Of** course, a year later I was diagnosed with a chronic stomach condition, which I still deal with today.

- **Nobody** can tell from the outside but every day I'm in pain.
- **The** funny thing is, now I deal with a different type of isolation.
- **The** isolation of someone who once had no pain tolerance, and now it is almost too high.
- **Yes**, **too** high.
- **Learning** to trust myself and accept that although I was strong before, I am physically strong now and that although I can ignore pain, sometimes I shouldn't, has been the hardest part of my experience to navigate.
- **I** don't know many other people who have so quickly, within a year to be exact, had their pain tolerance jump so high, and although sometimes this is isolating, I find strength through this remoteness, as it makes me reflect on what I've been through and that makes me proud.
- **Thank** you.