

Breathing Through Adversity: My Journey of Resilience, Identity, and Purpose

My life has been shaped by both challenges and resilience, and much of who I am today has been influenced by my journey with Cystic Fibrosis, cultural transitions, and personal growth. Although my path has not been easy, it has taught me strength, adaptability, and purpose. I have learned to see challenges not as limitations, but as experiences that shape my goals and the impact I want to have in the future.

As a starting point, I would like to share my story. I was not diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis until I was fourteen years old, after experiencing a severe health crisis that revealed how serious my condition truly was. Before that moment, I lived for years with ongoing symptoms that were misunderstood and treated as asthma. I frequently dealt with infections, stomach problems, and breathing difficulties, but there was never a clear explanation. Growing up, I became used to feeling “sick,” even without knowing why. That uncertainty was a normal part of my childhood, even though I did not fully understand it at the time.

Despite my health struggles, my childhood in Mexico was meaningful and filled with love. I grew up surrounded by my family and deeply connected to my culture and traditions. A very important figure in my life was my grandmother, who played a role similar to a second mother. I spent most of my time at her house, where she taught me values, traditions, and the importance of family unity. She gave me emotional stability during times when my health was unpredictable. Even though I experienced frequent illnesses, my childhood was still beautiful because of the strong sense of belonging and support I had within my family.

At the age of eleven, my life changed when I moved back to the United States after spending years in a small rural village and relocating to a big city. This transition was one of the most difficult experiences of my life. I had to start completely over in a new country, learn a new language, and adjust to an unfamiliar education system. I did not speak English, which made school overwhelming and isolating at first. At the same time, I was still dealing with ongoing health issues that had not yet been properly diagnosed. Despite these challenges, I slowly began to adapt. Learning English and building new friendships required effort and patience, but over time, I developed resilience and independence. This experience taught me that growth often comes from discomfort and change.

Everything became clearer when I was fourteen years old and experienced a major health crisis. My condition worsened significantly, I lost a large amount of weight, dropping to only 60 pounds, my lung function declined, and my blood sugar levels became unstable. I was hospitalized immediately and stayed for several days. During this time, doctors and medical students were surprised by my condition and by the fact that I had survived so long without a proper diagnosis. After years of being treated for asthma, I finally received the correct diagnosis of Cystic Fibrosis.

Receiving my diagnosis was both overwhelming and life-changing. It explained years of symptoms, but it also marked the beginning of a new reality. Once I began proper treatment, my life changed dramatically. For the first time, I experienced what it felt like to breathe more easily, sleep without constant coughing, and have my body properly absorb nutrients. Simple things like eating and resting became easier.

However, living with Cystic Fibrosis also means continuing daily treatment and management. My routine includes therapies, medications, and regular medical care, which have become a consistent part of my life. During my first years of college, balancing my health and education was extremely challenging. I often woke up at 5:00 a.m. to complete my treatments before attending classes. On many days, I would return home physically exhausted, but I remained committed to my education and determined not to give up. These experiences taught me discipline, responsibility, and perseverance.

Over time, I realized that I needed a more sustainable balance between my health and academic life. At the beginning of this semester, I transitioned to a fully online program. This decision allowed me to better manage my condition while continuing my education. It gave me the flexibility to complete my therapies consistently, rest when my body needs it, and focus more effectively on my studies. This change significantly improved my ability to maintain both my health and academic performance. It also helped me understand the importance of adapting when life requires it.

Alongside my studies, I have also continued to build my professional experience. I currently work a part-time job with a flexible schedule that allows me to manage my health needs. In addition, I am preparing to begin a new role as a medical scribe, which will allow me to gain direct experience in the healthcare field. This opportunity is very important to me because it connects my personal experiences with my future career goals and helps me understand healthcare documentation from a practical perspective.

My academic and career goals are centered on Health Information Management and medical coding. I plan to complete my degree and pursue the RHIA certification after graduation. In addition, I plan to obtain my CCA certification to become a certified medical coder. My long-term goal is to work in a remote or hybrid position in medical coding, which will allow me to build a stable career while also managing my health effectively. This career path is especially meaningful to me because it combines healthcare, organization, and flexibility.

In conclusion, my life story is not defined by Cystic Fibrosis alone, but by how I have learned to live with it and grow through it. My experiences in Mexico, my transition to the United States, my diagnosis, and my educational journey have all shaped my identity and my goals. I am determined to continue building my future in healthcare, not only for myself, but also to positively impact others who face similar challenges. My journey has given me strength, purpose, and a clear direction for the future I want to create.