

A Place that Wasn't Always a Home

Kelly Robinson

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. What might make a place *not* feel like home?
2. Have you ever lived somewhere that did not feel like home? If so, describe it.
3. Look at the headings. What do you think will be the flow of the story?

Past

I had a roof over my head, but I didn't always have a home.

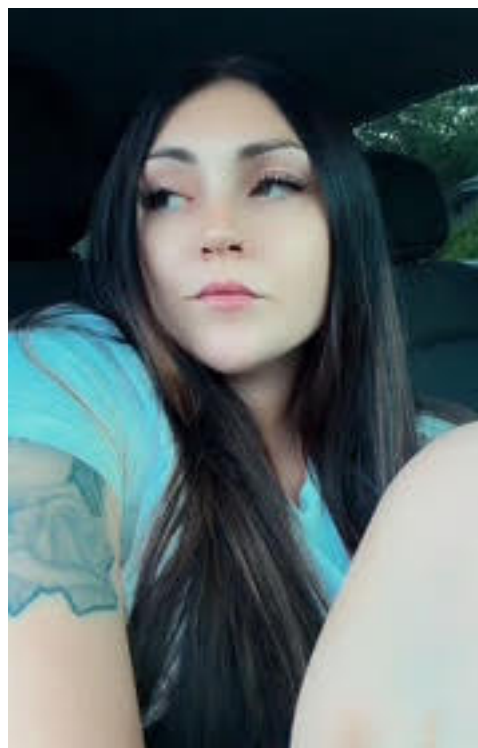
When I was young, my mom struggled with addiction, and our house never felt steady. I grew up around partying, fighting, and chaos. Every day when I went home after school, it felt like a question I didn't want answered. What would I be walking into? I never knew. Some nights were loud. Some nights were tense. Some nights, I just wished things felt "normal."

It felt like I had a different life than my peers. There were people in and out of my mom's life, including boyfriends who weren't always kind or safe. I saw things I never fully understood, but I felt the weight of them anyway. I could see the pain in my mother's eyes, and I could feel her guilt. I felt like I needed to grow up fast and be there for her.

The hardest part is that I still called it home. It was my home, and it was all I knew. I didn't realize home was supposed to feel safe, calm, and steady. Home isn't just a place to sleep. It's a feeling. It's being able to walk through the door and breathe. It's feeling safe, cared for, and at peace. I had a place to live but I didn't always have that feeling of security.

Present

What makes me feel at home most is the presence of people I love. When my family is laughing together, sharing a meal, or just sitting in the same



room, I feel content. On hard days, being around familiar faces brings a sense of peace that instantly makes everything feel okay again.

Another thing that creates my sense of home is routine. Simple things like waking up in my own bed, making dinner every night, or hearing everyday sounds can be comforting. These routines make life feel steady and predictable, which can be especially important during stressful times. I did not have routines and predictability growing up.

Home is also connected to memories. Certain places, songs, or even smells can bring back moments that make me feel safe and happy. Music from the 1980s reminds me of good times with my mom. I have the same car freshener in my car that she always had because it brings me a sense of peace and nostalgia. Even though

my home wasn't stable when I was growing up, I did have moments of joy with my mom. This is tremendously important to me because my mother passed away in 2017.

Breaking the Cycle

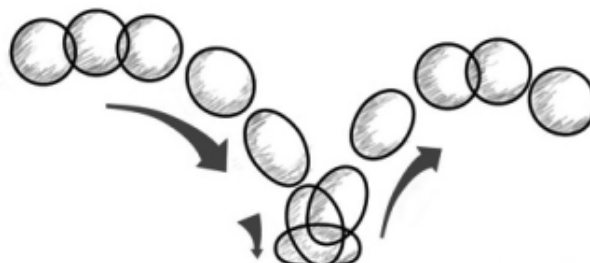
I feel proud that I can remember these fragile moments with my mom. They have helped me to honor my mother and forgive her. Now, being an adult and a mother of two, I am determined to break the cycle of my childhood. I have transitioned from having an unstable childhood to creating a stable one for my children.

Kelly Robinson is a student at Mt. Desert Island Adult Education in Ellsworth, Maine. She is 28 years old and has two children.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. Discuss the story. After sharing your thoughts and hearing from others, say and write down a one-sentence summary.
2. List some of the specific ways home did not feel like home when Kelly was growing up. List some of the specific ways she has created a home for herself as an adult.
3. Kelly has some bad memories of her childhood, but she also calls to mind some good memories. Being able to do this contributes to her resilience. Read more about resilience in the box on the right.
4. Notice how Kelly constructs paragraphs. Underline the topic sentences. Does she share details that support her topic sentences? Which paragraphs have strong details? Which could benefit from more details?
5. Write about a time you were resilient. Use a topic sentence in each paragraph and include at least three supporting details.

Resilience



Kelly shows a lot of resilience in her life. Resilience is the ability to “bounce back” or recover from difficulties and challenges. Check out Issue #35 of The Change Agent, “Tales of Resilience,” and find many more stories by adult learners about their strategies for staying in school, thriving despite difficult family situations, recovering from addiction, and joining with others to fight back against the obstacles placed before them.

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Tayvona "Mother Earth" James. Read her full story on p. 22.

// I didn't have the opportunity to read a book, so I had to read the environment. No one watched me, so I had to watch everything else. I didn't have the tools I needed to make a life for myself, but that motivated me to find the tools. //

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