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Carrying A Secret

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Carrying a Secret

Alejandra Valdez

When you carry a secret you sometimes have to lie to keep it. It was my 21st birthday, my whole family came to my house to celebrate, even my family from Arizona. It was one of the best birthdays I've had so far. One person was missing, however, my little sister. My aunt, uncle, and cousins all asked "¿Dónde está Carla?" My parents and I agreed to tell everyone the same thing "Oh, está con su amiga." My family in shock responded "How can she miss your birthday." I felt terrible for lying; I didn't want to make her look like the bad guy. What my family didn't know was that she was at the Children's Behavioral Health hospital.

I carried the secret inside me for half the day but finally spilled the beans to one of my closest cousins. I told her how it had been a tough couple of days and that my sister was showing signs of suicidal behavior. Since I live far away at school, I only heard about it when I got home and saw it for myself. My sister was making threats to kill herself and expressing how she hates everyone. I knew I had to get help for my sister so I called the police. I explained to my cousin how my parents didn't want anyone to know because we didn't want anyone to judge us.

There is a lot of stigma in our community regarding mental health, people don't think it's real or people are unaware of the resources available for help. As a Latina Psychology major the first thing family members ask me is "¿Vas a trabajar con locos?" I explain to my family how Psychology is about helping others, whether it is in mental health, advocacy, or research. I am glad I was able to be a resource for my family during this difficult moment. It was my 21st birthday and my little sister wasn't there.