

Why Is Your TV So Loud?

I believe I remember most of my childhood. I remember my favourite cartoons that I have liked since I was five. I remember wanting to be a lawyer one week, and a journalist the other, and an actress right after that. I remember my dad trying his best to teach me how to ride a bike, and convincing me that I am not going to fall. I remember my mom baking my favourite cake so often I started hating it.

Most of all, I remember my childhood in fragments. Small scenes that sometimes play in my head randomly years later. A child riding a bicycle reminds me of my scrapped knees and summer evenings. The smell of fresh pastries reminds me of standing beside my mom in the kitchen. Sometimes when I catch sight of a scar on my leg I immediately think of the exact fall that caused it.

The thing about memories is that they never arrive in order. They just show up wherever they want. One of those is the television. Very often my friends or just people who visited our house would ask the same question: "Why is your TV so loud?" Sometimes it was about the TV, sometimes about the radio. Either way, I never understood the question, my parents are chill about it, why wouldn't it be?

I grew up in a deaf household. Whenever people find that out, they think of a quiet apartment. Mine wasn't quiet at all. The television was loud, doors slammed, dishes clattered. If one of my parents wanted the other's attention, the lights would flicker on and off. Sometimes, if someone was in another room, all it took was hitting your foot against the floor hard enough for the vibrations to travel through the apartment. Me and my brother always knew that all of this was completely normal. To our friends though, it was fascinating. Whenever someone came over, they would stare at the television and eventually ask the same question: "Can't your parents

hear how loud that is?" No, and that was kind of the point. Our apartment wasn't special. It wasn't bigger or nicer than anyone else's. But to my friends, it always seemed different because things that would drive their parents crazy barely mattered to mine. To me, it was simply home. When I was little, it felt enormous. The hallway seemed endless. The ceilings felt impossibly high. The walk from my room to the kitchen felt like crossing an entire building.

Most of my childhood memories live in that kitchen. I remember dragging a chair across the floor and pushing it against the counter so I could reach things myself. I remember trying to sneak sweets while my mom cooked and somehow getting caught every single time. It took me a long time to understand how I was always getting caught. The kitchen smelled like fresh bread, herbs, fruit, and whatever happened to be cooking that day. During winter, the smell of cocoa joined everything else. I remember sitting there talking to my mom while the windows fogged from the heat of cooking. Every time it happened, I would tell her the same thing. "It looks like we're inside a cloud." Even now, whenever I see fogged-up windows, I think of that kitchen.

As much as I loved winter, my strongest memories belong to summer. Every afternoon, my friends would knock on our door announcing that everyone is gathering outside. Within minutes, we would all be running downstairs, staying out until it got dark enough that our parents came looking for us. We played everything, hide-and-seek, tag, football, basketball, and games we invented ourselves. Those invented games were always the most entertaining because the rules changed constantly, depending on who was losing, and the person making the rules somehow always happened to be winning. We argued constantly, got offended, declared friendships over, then a few minutes later we were all playing together again. The playground was never empty. The grandmothers sat on benches discussing everyone's lives with so much detail that they could have worked as investigative journalists. The grandfathers played chess and

argued over rules they had been using for decades. Someone was always watering flowers. Someone was always hanging laundry. Someone was always calling their child home for dinner. The smell of dust mixed with hot asphalt. In the evenings, barbecue smoke drifted through the air. Back then, the playground felt enormous. Now it takes less than a minute to walk across.

School became another place filled with memories. I remember shopping for notebooks before every school year. I always picked the prettiest ones and promised myself I would keep them neat. I never did. Within a week they looked like they had survived a natural disaster. I remember sharing snacks, talking during lessons, and staring out the window waiting for the bell to ring. I think school was also where I slowly began realizing my family wasn't quite like everyone else's, not in a bad way, but still. I watched classmates call their parents on the phone, children yell for their mothers across crowded playgrounds, parents attend meetings without needing anyone to interpret for them. The thing I hated most was translating. Not because I was embarrassed. I was just painfully shy. My mom would ask what the teacher had said, then the teacher would ask something back, and suddenly I was stuck in the middle of a conversation I wanted no part in. At the time it felt annoying. Now it feels different. Growing up, I realized I was doing things many of my friends never had to do. Making phone calls, explaining paperwork, trying to understand conversations about banks, apartment repairs, and adult responsibilities so I could explain them to someone else. Back then, I never thought much about it. Now I understand that for my parents, I wasn't just helping. I was helping them navigate a world that often wasn't built with them in mind. One of my favorite memories is hearing my mother tell people how proud she was of me and how grateful she was whenever I helped. I didn't think much of it then. I do now.

The strange thing about childhood is that you never realize you're creating memories while you're living them. You assume the playground will always be full. Assume you'll always know every child there, the grandmothers will always be sitting on those same benches, and your apartment will always feel enormous. Then one day you return and the playground is quieter, the children are strangers, some of the benches are empty, and the apartment feels smaller than you remembered. Suddenly all the ordinary things become precious. Looking back, I realize those years taught me much more than I understood at the time. They taught me how to notice people. How to communicate, how to help, how to survive difficult situations without panicking. Because of that, I know how to keep going when life gets hard because, in many ways, I've been practicing my entire life. And maybe that is why I want to spend my future helping others. I know how easy it is for people to feel overwhelmed, misunderstood, or alone. If there is one thing my childhood taught me, it is that even small acts of help can change someone's day, sometimes their entire life. When people ask me where I grew up, I usually tell them the name of the neighborhood. But that's never the real answer. Because I grew up in a loud apartment with a louder television. In a kitchen that smelled like bread and cocoa. On a playground that felt as large as the world. And in a family that taught me lessons I didn't fully understand until years later.