

My fridge was a 300-pound temptress I couldn't resist. Every night, I would find myself exploring my fridge's interior for what felt like hours, staring into her blank abyss. Just when I would think I was done for the night, she would pull me back in and I'd spend another 20 minutes basking in her dim light. It became harder to resist her grasp, and I wasted almost every moment ravishing shelves for leftovers before bed, binging bags of popcorn if I was bored, or baking and eating cookies just because I could. She made food my safe space; it was always something that I never had to worry about, something I never lost control over.

Being diagnosed with type one diabetes threw our relationship off track.

At the ripe age of fifteen I was forced to burn down every wall of my food shelter and put up my own defenses against the very thing I once held so close. My life turned from spoons to syringes as I now carefully calculated every carb in my food and administered it through a needle in my stomach. I quickly realized how I took every midnight snack, every freshly baked brownie, and every piece of celebratory candy for granted. As my disease progressed, I learned that I had only been half-taught how to deal with type one diabetes. Sure, I received the supplies and medicine and was told how to check my blood sugar six times a day by pricking my fingertips, but what I was never told was how to adjust socially. I was floored when my closest friends would make offhanded remarks like, "So you just ate a ton of sugar and now you're diseased?" and "I would buy this bag of Oreos but I don't want to end up like you."

As I watched my peers' biggest concerns become their next math test or the boy they liked, I realized that I was given no choice but to grow out of my fifteen-year-old problems. A part of me was proud of myself for becoming so mature so quickly, but another part felt robbed blind. I was fifteen but forced to frontline a fight against my own body and win. Nevertheless, I was determined to get back onto the kitchen tiles, and I wasn't about to let my pancreas stop me. It was true that nothing could replace the happiness that food brought me, but I was sure I could find something else in the kitchen that would make me just as satisfied. I thought back to before my diagnosis and searched for a way to enjoy my safe space again without worrying about needles or insulin.

So rather than pouring food into myself, I poured myself into my food and started baking again for the first time in months. This time I baked not for myself to eat, but as therapy. There was something so simple and calming about the way a recipe laid everything out for me that made me feel more secure than I ever had since my diagnosis. I whisked my sadness into my cake batters, folded in my stress with chocolate chips, watched my anger rise away with my bread doughs. I even got a job at a bakery where I bonded with customers like a father and his diabetic son, whom I helped understand not only the number of carbs in the cupcakes we served but also diabetes care and how to adjust to a new diagnosis. Now my sweet tooth no longer ached to eat my own confections, so I gave them to everyone around me. Watching their faces light with excitement when I would surprise them with desserts was more filling than any late night rendezvous with my fridge. Even though food wasn't my own safe space anymore, I knew I couldn't let anyone else take it for granted.