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**Trans-parent-cy: What really is family?**

Family is one of the most important parts of your identity. They are the people that you look up to form you. Unfortunately, I grew up alone with a single mom, which gave me a poor perspective on family. My mom and dads relationship has always been a troubled one. When I was two, my mom moved us down to Durango while my dad stayed in Denver. I couldn’t understand why. I always tried to get them back together but one day my dad couldn’t handle my constant bugging anymore and strait up told me that would never happen. For some reason that just didn’t sit quite right with me and I could never figure out why. In a way, it felt like I was being torn between the two of them. Weren't they supposed to be together? Weren't we supposed to love each other like a regular family? But sense we don’t, what is the true meaning family?

The first answer that came to me was something like this: Dad loves Mom, Mom loves Dad, and they both love their kids. Everything is just dandy and as many see it, normal. It was perfect. Too perfect. And the sad thing was that I wanted to believe, against all evidence and experience, that it was true. It was very confusing but as I became more aware of socialization this year, I traced these thoughts back and realized they were threaded into my mind by many different things. Somewhere obvious, others not so much, but after sifting through them some more, biggest influence I could comprehend was media. The yellow layer of my mask displays this with the “family” holding each other and smiling in the tv. The red X through it all shows my denial against this attempt to make me think these lies are the truth. The words around it are what I think about when I think of what the medias influence creates.

Maybe I could figure this out through personal experience. Nothing rose to the surface of my mind immediately but as I thought more, I realized we aren't a very good example of family. Maybe once long ago we were but my parents are to angry at each other and I at both of them for reasons we can’t even explain to each other. No, this cant be family either. Family always loves and forgives each other. I showed this on the second layer of my mask. The picture on the left is my mom and the one on the right my dad. The line down the center describes there anger for one another and how it is literally tearing my identity in two, as if I’m living in two different worlds with barely any solid facts in which to base my identity. The gold on the bottom spreading up towards them represents my forgiveness slowly ebbing towards them sense we are relatives and I don’t believe I could be angry with them my whole life.

So if neither of these are the truth, what is? Maybe, I couldn’t find the truth because I’ve been asking the wrong question all along. Maybe the question that should be asked is what do I want my family to be? What are the qualities you think of when you think of family? I think of happiness, understanding, love and trust which, I believe, has been influenced into me by society but in a different sort of way. The people that accept me for who I am and love me back have showed it to me. The ones I hold closest to me, the ones I get along best with; the people I call friends. These amazing people are my true family and always will be. This is displayed on my mask by some of my friends and family members that I hold dear, I wish I could fit all of them on but I have a big family!

To conclude, true family, in my opinion, is who you get along with, feel comfortable around, love and trust. For me it is my friends but to you, it could be anybody. Your flesh-and-blood relatives, your long-distance-love, or even your pet. Everyone has a family. Question is, who will you choose to be part of yours?