

## **My Life-Span**

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My name is Aixa Migdalia Lyons and I was born to Saba and Jaime Lyons. I came from a middle class family (Lyons,2021). I am forty-four years old, a “mid-life,” female adult. I believe if it were not for God I would not be here today, nor would I have had the opportunity to continue development from infancy. “Development is the pattern of movement or change that begins at conception and continues through the human lifespan.” (Santrock, 2019, p.4). My milestones were affected by environmental experiences. I realize now how different circumstances made me who I am today. Some of the things that happened to me are very sad, but God is healing me. In the following, I will give details of my development and milestones and show how early life milestones continue impacting adult life challenges and cycles.

My parents, Saba and Jaime, were middle-aged when I was born. It was not planned by my parents, I was a surprise. I was a menopause baby. When I was born, my oldest sister Brunilda was nineteen, my brother Javier was seventeen, and my sister Bexaida was fifteen. My mother had a lot of heartburn for a while and decided to go to the doctor. The doctor gave her a check up and told her that it was not heartburn, but that she was pregnant. In the hospital they performed an ultrasound on my mother and they told her I was going to be a girl. My mother did not believe it because she does not believe in doctors. In our textbook, it states that “women between 16-34 are less likely to give birth to children with Down Syndrome, but younger and older women are more likely”(Santrock, 2019, p.58). I could have been a baby born with Down Syndrome because both of my parents were older, my mother was forty-three and my father was fifty-four. My mother’s doctor was concerned that I might be born with Down Syndrome, and

they wanted her to abort me but my mom said “no.” I was born on June 26 ,1977. I was born at almost ten pounds. My mother told me I was a healthy, happy baby.

“At six months old, I fell ill because there was no heat in the house. My mother took me to the hospital and they told her that I had croup” (Lyons, 2021). “However, the medicine they gave me was not working. I began to die and turn blue and my mother started screaming in Spanish, “Save my baby! She is dying!” My mother told me that the nurses were crying because I was turning blue. She told me that another doctor came and told her that I had pneumonia, not croup. The doctor gave me medication but they said that my sight might have been affected. They told my parents that my development might be affected. They were right. Because of the fact that my brain and body were not fully developed to be able to fight off the illness, with only six months of growth, I was affected cognitively and developmentally” (Lyons, 2021) I believe my frontal lobes were affected due to the fact that the textbook states that the frontal lobes govern movement (Santrock, 2019).

Bruni, my oldest sister, told me that before I got sick, “I crawled really fast and seemed to be really smart. My motor skills were developing correctly, but after my parents brought me back home my sister said I was sickly and seemed like I did not know how to crawl anymore. I was no longer alert. I truly believe I was affected cognitively because I almost died (Lyons, 2021); however, at my milestone age of one I started using the “gross motor skill” of walking. As far as “language milestones,” I started talking Spanish at eighteen months.

At the age of five, I reached the milestone of writing in kindergarten. I never went to preschool. As a young child, I was fluently bilingual because I spoke Spanish first and my sister taught me how to speak English. From kindergarten to third grade, I loved to read and did well with reading. In third grade, I almost got left back but I passed the reading test so they let me go

forward to fourth grade. Although I did not get left back, I should have because I was not comprehending the reading tasks well when I was in fifth grade. I also did not respond much in class because I did not understand well, but I did my best. In fifth grade, my teacher would make fun of me along with other students. When they made fun of me, I felt stupid. I did not even want to answer any questions because I felt I would be made fun of and feel “stupid.” Even today, when I hear people laughing, it makes me feel less than and defeated. I put my head down when I hear laughter.

My father’s parenting style was “authoritarian parenting” (Santrock, 2019). He was “restrictive” and always yelling and screaming. My father did not allow me to go out and play with other children. He seemed to be an angry man at times and as it says in the textbook, a child undergoing that style of parenting is usually “unhappy, fearful, and have weak communication skills” (Santrock, 2019, p.243). As far as punishment one time he screamed at me and I pouted and he hit me on the lips with a rolled up newspaper and I got up to leave and he told me not to move. I was afraid to move. This affected me emotionally and cognitively.

Emotionally it affected me when I got older because I was afraid of people when they would scream or yell at me. For example, when I was in highschool one of my classmates yelled at me and I put my head down feeling ashamed and it was as if my father was yelling at me. My father made me feel like I had no right to express my emotions. I was scared of my father as a child, but I also started hating him because he used “emotional abuse, mal treatment” (Santrock, 2019, p.247) towards me. My father was verbally abusive towards me. He would tell me that I was nuts and I actually started thinking that I was. Harshly, he would also tell me that I looked like my older sister but was not smart like her. He stated that I was dumb like my mother. Him calling me dumb like my mom affected me because when I would get angry with her I would

write in my journal that she was dumb or stupid. Uncaringly, he stated that he wanted to divorce my mother, but he would not leave because of me. I wished at times that he would leave my mother, that is how much anger and hatred I felt towards him. I even had a dream, as a child, of stabbing him in the back with a pitch fork. The dream scared me and I never forgot it. I remember it like I dreamt it today. I have continued to struggle with the fear of people because of the way he treated me and communicated with me.

This fear has even affected my response to anger and the emotions that come along with it. When I get mad, I feel scared of losing my mind and I fear that something would happen to me or that someone would beat me up. I always felt helpless when my father would scream at me. In my first fight, which was not really a fight because the girl gave me a black eye and I did nothing but run. I felt defenseless and took flight because she was running after me and I was afraid of being hurt further.

My mother was not around at the times when my father would verbally abuse me. He would say these things to me when I was alone. I never told her about any of this until I was an adult. My mother, like my father, was verbally abusive as well she would call me “*pendeja*” which means stupid or a\_\_hole. She would also call me “*hija de la gran p\_ta*” (daughter of the grand hoe). These words always hurt me even when I did not know what they meant at first. Although she was a bit verbally abusive, as well, she was more warm and more caring at times than my father. What I loved about my mom is her cooking and I learned how to cook simple Spanish foods like” *huevos revoltillos, empanadas, habichuelas and arroz*” (scrambled eggs, meat turnovers, rice and beans). My mother taught me how to cook and let me cook. She did not teach me everything. She forgot to teach me about (desarrollando) puberty. My “menarche” started at age 11 (Santrock, 2019). I had a lot of pain one night. I woke up in the morning and

was walking out of my room. My mom said, “¡Aixa, *desarrollaste!*” I looked down and cried out, “I do not want to be a woman!” I was really upset and I felt ashamed. My mother told my father and he told my family. I put my head down in shame when he told my aunt, he said she is family. This showed me that my dad did not respect my privacy.

I was the last born and my sister Bruni was like a second mother to me, because she took care of me and prepared me for the babysitter while my mom was at work. My mother was a seamstress. She was a hard worker. She did it for me. In my teenage years, I was rebellious and would argue with my mom. One day, at the age of fourteen, I pushed her. From that moment on, I never touched her again because my sister grabbed me by my neck and my mom slapped me several times. I learned my lesson about birth order and cultural expectations of what the youngest is able to do and not do, regardless of age. In the Latino culture it is an absolute offense to raise a hand and/or strike a parent without violent consequences. For me, I cannot lay a hand on my mom and get away with it, at least in my house it was that way. In other cultures, the kids may strike or even beat up their parents, like it is normal, and receive no consequences.

In my adolescent years, I was bullied. One of my bullies called my house and cursed at my father. I was scared of the girl who was bullying me, for no reason, I might add. All I did was try to be her friend.

Another observation I have about myself is that I remember being sexualized from a young age. Exposure to pornography, out of curiosity, helped me continue to focus on my body and not the possibility that a caregiver may have sexually abused me. I highly regret feeding my mind those images, as they intrusively come into my mind, even today. .

It states, in the text, adolescents are “developing their sexual identity” (Santrock, 2019). In my adolescent years, there were different young men trying to see what they could get out of

me sexually. I allowed some of them to touch me inappropriately, but I was trying to wait for marriage, as well, not understanding sexuality or male drive. I made mistakes and experimented in the past, but I never asked to be raped. Santrock states that “rape is forcible sexual intercourse with a person who does not give consent” (Santrock, p.418). “At nineteen my ex-boyfriend, who I did not tell my family about, drugged and raped me. I did not remember everything until I was twenty-five years old. I blame myself for going to his house and not telling anyone. He also took out a knife on me” (Lyons, 2021). This “coercive sexual activity” traumatized me (Santrock, p.419) and because he had a mental illness and had threatened me, I sought to get out of that relationship, as soon as possible.

In my early adulthood, when I went to Hunter College, I gave my life to Christ and even though at times I wanted to give up on Jesus, He never gave up on me. I was grateful for the Lord being in my life. When I accepted Jesus in my life, He started speaking to my heart and would lead me to pray for others. While I was in college I met the man I thought I would marry, but of course, he was seeing if he could find a way to have sex with me.

I met Rey around the time that my father died. When my father died, it tore my world apart. I suddenly started having suicidal ideations, I wanted to die. My father left me with so much pain. I hated him and I loved him. He did his best to raise me and now he was gone. Although I was hurt so much by him, I did not want him separated from me.

I was working at the Gap at this time and I could not handle work and school at the same time. I had to quit working at the Gap. As far as Rey, he broke up with me when I was twenty-five. My best friend and I were talking the other day and I realized that Rey did not love me, although he said he wanted to marry me, he just wanted to see if he could get into my pants. “He had the audacity to ask me whether I would get upset and divorce him, if we married and he

cheated on me” (Lyons, 2021). When I look back, I am thankful he broke up with me, he did me a favor.

In reflection on this relationship, I realized that I was not nice to Rey because I was controlling and angry. I would call him names and curse him out. Anyone would have thought that I was not saved and was a sailor with the way I used to curse him out. My father would curse a lot. What my father said and how he controlled our family, is how I acted towards the boyfriends I had. I am thankful that I did not have intercourse with Rey and deepen the bond that was already so strong. I believe I probably would have suffered a nervous breakdown, if I did and I am thankful I did not. I seemed to be radiating an attraction for people who sought to use me and prey upon my sexual trauma.

In 2006, I developed a mental illness. Sometimes I feel as if from the age of twenty-nine until my age of forty-two, I lost who I was. It was as if I were sleeping and I woke up at forty-two years of age. My thoughts were only focused on the illness and where my life had gone and how robbed I felt. For years, I wanted to go back to school but I did not know if I was smart enough and everything my father told me would come back to my mind. My parents did a lot of damage. I wonder if their parents did the same to them. The mental illness also caused isolation, due to shame, regret, fear and consistent anxiety. This withdrawal resulted in me believing that in those years I was not worthy of acceptance and a love I knew I had not known, apart from the love of Jesus, which gave me hope.

I am currently struggling with fear of what someone might say to me or about me or what I might hear someone say with regards to me. Looking back on my life, I have to say that what it says in the bible is true: “Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Proverbs 18:21, KJV). I am learning to love myself by taking care of my mind and body. I am learning that I am worthy

to be respected. I am beginning to realize that I am not who my father said I was. I am a daughter of the King and am accepted. I am intelligent, in my own way. What happened to me when I was younger does not define who I am.

My counseling lens has been impacted by the way I reflect on my own development. Looking back, I can see the patterns and cycles of behavior in me and those around me, as well as my emotions and responses to those continuing cycles. As a counselor-in-training, I believe it is important to explore my future clients' development because the clinical value, in those reflections and historical events, will show both my client and me pattern behaviors and responses to trauma. This can include who they are attracted to, preferences, self-talk that is negative, and fear of others' opinions. Knowing how a client was verbally abused can inform me how to speak to them in a healing tone. Understanding how a client has been sexually abused by someone can inform how I provide treatment and/or advise them for best options towards healing/recovery, as a therapist. Becoming aware of a client's learning or communication challenge, due to developmental challenges or delays, will inform the speed of our conversation and the care I provide to make sure they feel safe to reflect.

## References

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