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*“What do you want to be when you grow up?”*  
*“A Doctor.”*

I used to have all sorts of answers to this question when I was young. By 4th or 5th grade, I realized the “correct” answer to this question was “a doctor.” I grew up as the oldest daughter in a Vietnamese immigrant family. Both of my parents immigrated to the US young and started working immediately. They never started high school because their families couldn’t afford to send them to school. They knew very little English when they first came over, and still don’t know as much now.

They came to the US for a better life. They came to make more money so that future generations to come live a better life than they’ve lived. When I was younger, my parents constantly worked overtime to support their four kids. They worked close to minimum wage doing physical labor. If they could’ve, they wouldn’t be working their bodies so hard, always on their feet, doing such hard labor. My parents could be doing what they liked to do.

*“Who do you think makes a lot of money?”*  
*“Doctors.”*

Leading their lives like this, my parents knew an education would help their children succeed. There was always the pressure for us to get an education and be the best. As the oldest, the pressure was worse for me. My parents raised me to be a doctor. This was the only career path I could have chosen. My freedom to choose was limited to what type of doctor I wanted to be.

Did I want to be a doctor? Not really. I applied to college for a major that had nothing to do with the health field. I realized that I could never be a doctor and never saw myself as one. I wanted to do something I liked and that wasn't for money.

I didn’t like the future my parents saw for me, and I told them that. They didn’t like the road they were walking on, but their circumstances didn’t let them pave a new one. So, they instead started paving one for their kids.

Did I expect their reactions? Of course, but it was much worse than I thought. When I told them the truth that I was hiding for a while, they were very upset. There was yelling, screaming, and crying. My parents told me that I’d never amount to anything if I didn’t become a doctor. I’d never get a job, make any money, and be able to do anything in life. I’d suffer my whole life and regret my decisions. They saw the life they’ve lived as my future.

They’ve now accepted the fact that it’s too late for me to be a doctor. From time to time, they tell me they wished they’d convinced me to be a doctor and reinforce that ideal more years ago. I was a huge disappointment nearly four years ago and I still am in their eyes. However, I picked the road I liked and I’m happier with my decision. I’m a much happier person now than I was four years ago. I’m someone who can fight for what I want and strives for success knowing I’m doing it for myself. I can be a passionate and determined person in anything I want to do. When your life revolves around family, it's difficult to go against it. It’s hard to fight against the expectations of others, especially family, but if it’s for you, it’s worth it.

*“Are you happier now?”*  
*“I’m not a doctor, but I’m happy.”*