

The train bumps along the tracks, squeaking and roaring as it comes to each stop. My mom dozes off beside me and my sister sits, flipping through a magazine. I just sit, staring out the window. The three days I spent with my grandmother flew by. As the land outside zooms by, so do the thoughts in my head. I think about her, and about all the problems she has overcome in her life. I think about all that she has accomplished. Most of all, I think about what an amazing person she is. She can always make me smile, even when I am sad. I remember when I was crying a few years ago because of some friendship troubles I was having at school. My grandmother sat with me on the floor and hugged me for a long time. She comforted me, and soon after I felt much better. I know that whenever I have a problem, I can talk to my her, and she will be there to help. Each time I visit my grandmother, I am wowed by how hard-working, strong, and caring she is, and these qualities make her an influential person in my life.

One reason why my grandmother is an influential person in my life is because she is hard-working. When she was a young girl, she moved to Pennsylvania from Germany. She started going to a school for students who spoke English as a second language. The teachers taught lessons and spoke in English, and the students were also only allowed to speak in English. She worked hard and taught herself English by listening to her teachers and the other students. After three months of going to this school, she moved to a regular school, where English was the students' first language. Now, she can speak the language fluently with no trouble at all. My grandmother also showed how hardworking she is when she earned her doctorate. She held a full time job, took care of her four children, and then went to school at Rutgers University each night. She worked extremely hard to earn her PhD in education, and was successful in doing so. She soon became a teacher, which leads to another example of when my grandmother showed how hard-working she is. This example is her becoming a

superintendent of schools for 17 years. She was a teacher for 5 years at Wall Township, an elementary school in New Jersey, and then worked hard until she was granted the position of superintendent, a job she had wanted for a very long time. Before becoming a superintendent, she taught kids with Down's Syndrome, Neurologically Impaired kids, and kids with emotional disabilities. She worked hard to give them a good learning experience, and even had a school named after her called the, "Johanna Huntowski Academy," which is located in New Jersey. My grandmother achieved these accomplishments because of her hard work, and this characteristic makes her an influential person in my life.

My grandmother's incredible strength is another reason why she is an influential person in my life. One time that my grandmother showed how strong she is, is when she overcame breast cancer. She was diagnosed with breast cancer in the year 2000. She had to get surgery in November 2000, and then had to go through radiation until February 2001. In March 2001, she was diagnosed cancer-free. My grandmother was strong and fought the sickness. That is not the only struggle she has gone through in her life. When she was a child, the Nazis took over her parents business in Germany. Her family struggled financially from this loss. They could not afford as much as some other families. Her family had to live in a tent in army barracks, and they had to eat potatoes every night. My grandmother stayed positive throughout this experience, and her positivity helped her family to make it through this struggle. This leads into the third example where she showed what a strong person she is, which is when she overcame an eye disease she had when she was a child. She got this eye disease from malnourishment. Sores grew on her corneas, and these sores became permanent scars. She needed glasses, but while her family lived in Germany, they could not afford them. Her eyesight was very bad, and she had trouble playing games and doing things with other children. Her eyes were so sensitive to light, that sometimes

she had to stay inside all day, or wrap her eyes in bandages if she wanted to go outside. She even had to miss school days because of her poor eyesight, which made it difficult to find friends. Not all of the kids were kind or understanding about her disease. She stayed positive and found other ways to have fun that did not include going outside, such as playing with a doll house for hours on end. Once my grandmother and her family moved to the United States, she was able to see an eye doctor, who gave her salve to heal her corneas. After many years, her eyes were healed. These experiences made my grandmother a stronger person, because they taught her how to be hopeful in hard times and to appreciate everything she had. She stayed positive and always looked on the bright side of situations. The quote, “what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger,” can definitely relate to my grandmother, which is another reason why she is an influential person in my life.

The last reason why my grandmother is an influential person in my life is, she is very caring. My grandmother shows how caring she is by coming to all of my recitals and important events. Last year, she drove six hours, all the way from Ocean, New Jersey to Medfield, just to see my dance recital. This showed how much of an effort she makes to come to special events, even when it is inconvenient. She cares about our interests, and ultimately about my family and me. Another way that my grandmother shows her caring nature, is by helping others. She makes food for poor people who do not have enough to eat, and she is on the Board of Easter Seals. She even used to tutor kids who needed special help in reading. My grandmother makes my life better by caring for me, but she also makes other people’s lives better. My grandmother also shows how caring she is by staying in close touch with with me. She stays in touch with me by writing letters to me and calling, texting, and emailing me. Last year, I started a gluten-free, dairy-free diet, and was very sad that I could not eat some of my favorite foods anymore. Once my grandmother heard that I was going on this diet, she immediately sent me a nice letter,

encouraging me and assuring me that the diet would make me feel much better. The letter showed how much she cared about my health and happiness. I will always remember how kind and encouraging her gesture was. My grandmother is caring towards me, and towards other people, which makes her an influential person in my life.

In conclusion, my grandmother is an influential person in my life. She is hard-working, strong, and caring, and she portrays these characteristics through everything she does. So, as the train comes to its final stop, so do my thoughts. My mom, sister and I all grab our suitcases and meet my dad once we get off the train. We load our suitcases into our car and start the drive home. Even though the visit with my grandmother is over, it does not mean I can not keep in touch with her, 'she always is happy to talk to me,' I think to myself. 'As a matter of fact I think I will text her right now.' I whip out my phone, and the conversation starts.