

30 min left until lunch would begin and I would eagerly wait for my name to be called day after day. I was so excited to go and help the cafeteria staff prepare for lunch. At first I loved the basic skills that I would learn while working with them. Like helping set up the fruit, restock the snack bar, and set up the trays with food. These skills helped me to become more organized in my own school work because the staff would always encourage punctuality and to make sure everything was done with intention. I was so honored to work with adults and learn from the experiences that they went through.

But as time went on these basic skills turned into something deeper. Getting to know them as a person made me appreciate school staff even more. I saw how strong they were for both having to use physical and emotional labor when working with kids. Specifically with me I was always greeted with open arms. Since they were from the latino community they would teach me more about my culture. Any problem that I had either in school or out of school they always had a *consejo* (advice) for me. They always knew what to tell me and would sometimes cheer me up with a second burrito that I adored.

When serving the lunch lines, it would often get really busy and I would become overwhelmed. One of the staff noticed and calmly told me *nomas respira despacio* (just breathe slowly). This has followed me all throughout my school career, from middle school until now. Whenever I'm overwhelmed I just think about the staff and just breathe slowly.

This has not only impacted but also my family. Being of a low-income latino family in west side Costa Mesa, they would often feel anxious about making sure bills were paid. Especially with my mother that has anxiety and father with depression, *nomas respira despacio* has been a saying that keeps us collected and brings us to the present. Because of this I saw the impact that mental wellbeing had on your everyday life especially for the hispanic community. There is no easy and open access to psychological help for families of lower income. If we are not healthy mentally how will we be able to grow as a community healthily? Many of the issues that latinos face are still having stigmas about mental health and thinking it is a myth. Even my parents thought this way until they faced it themselves. But this stigma only stunts the growth of a community and keeps this cycle of generational trauma. I want to break the cycle and this helped me realize that I want to become a psychologist specifically for low income families.

So without my experience with the Kaiser staff and lunch ladies I would not know how to deal with the anxiety I often face as well as my family's mental health. So because of this I am so grateful to the Kaiser community.