

*In the last few years, I've figured one substantial truth out for myself: I'm here, my purpose is to relate to others. I'm supposed to create a connection in my experiences. I want to be here for others in a way that I know I wanted more of when I was younger.*

*Following through with that, I want to make the space that trauma takes up safer. I want to be able to relate so that the idea of suffering doesn't feel as isolating and hurt as much as I know it does. In a sense, I'm trying to alleviate the stress that comes from not being fully understood or seen or heard. More than anything, I want to try to lessen the amount of pain that inevitably has to come before getting to the place I'm in: acceptance. Really, to try and prevent any of it. Ideally speaking, that's my main goal.*

*To clarify where all of this is coming from: for me, this all happened in high school. It was a place where I was able to figure out what counted as worth or importance, with some of the best people I've ever met. To the people who ultimately inspired and influenced my growth, Taylor (Swift), my music class, and parents: thank you so much. It has meant my improvement, and I'm so grateful for that.*

*And honestly, none of it was expected at all, that's mostly why I'm able to write this.*

*These all being things I learned from others first, I want to be able to give back the same insight along with everything I received: love, acceptance, support, relation, patience and understanding to no end. To make something easier for someone else, the same way that's exactly what happened to me.*

*This work is a constant reminder to even myself of what comes from allowing others to help or see you through. It's what comes from your persisting effort, and it's freedom once you finally realize what you have or what you've been given.*

*May your high school be a place of as much fun, uplift, and excitement as it was for me. I hope you accept my invitation of transparency with you in this work, in hopes of highlighting the final end result.*

*With all the love, honesty, compassion, empathy, support and understanding I have:*

*My name is Laura Fortini. This is my story.*