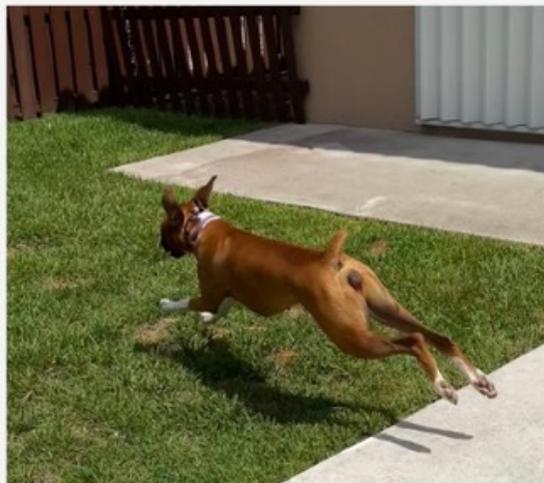




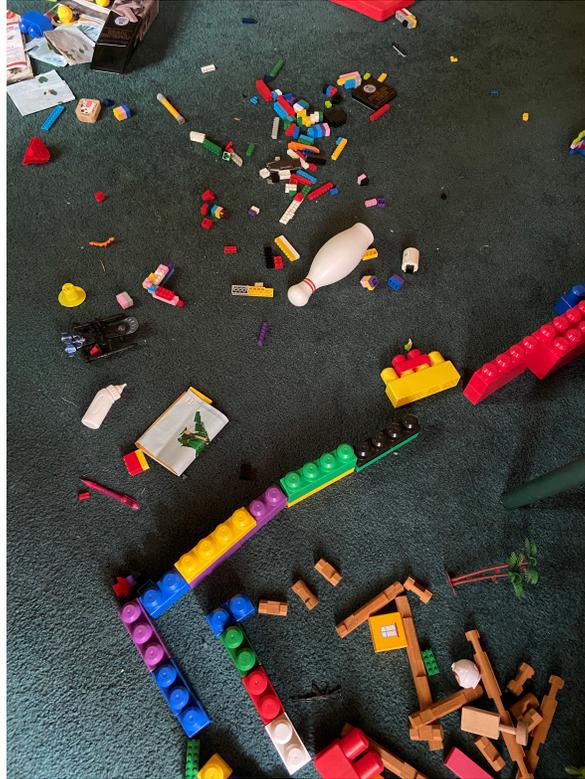
This is a picture of a mexican doll I have in my house. Everytime I look at a piece of Mexican culture a vulnerability of mine rises up. Although my appearance classifies me as a hispanic young girl, I have little knowledge of the hispanic culture. I don't know how to speak Spanish, I rarely cook Mexican food, and I have never had a traditional quinceanera. This picture labels my confusion of identity and my continuous struggle to label myself based on how I look.



The screen patio represents how at one point or another we've all felt trapped. Sometimes it's difficult to unmask and cope with emotions. However, once we do, we feel freer and happier (like the pictures of my dog running).



This picture represented how I felt during the school year. The rose in the front looks generally perfect at a glance, but if you look closer you can see that it's wilting around the edges. I related to this because last year all my classmates just saw me as a member of one of the best basketball teams in our state, but nobody really bothered to look beyond that. Nobody saw the part of me that was wilting; I was dealing with anxiety throughout the whole season but no one knew because it looked like my situation was perfect from the outside.



This is a visual representation of what I typically feel my brain looks like when I'm struggling with anxiety. My heart rate rapidly increases, I am overwhelmed with a sense of nausea, and before I know it whatever concrete ideas I had in my head break sometimes unable to be put back together again. I'm patient with my thoughts and I like to keep them separate from each other. When the anxiety comes over me the thoughts I worked so meticulously hard to build fall to pieces and scramble in places they shouldn't be. I feel uncomfortable that those beautiful ideas turn into worst-case scenarios advising me to find the nearest exit.



When I'm depressed I usually work up the courage to tell someone how I am feeling however, it doesn't immediately make me feel better. Often I feel even more naked and alone if that person can't relate to me. I do the best I can to lower my walls ("peel back my skin") and sometimes in that vulnerability, that same strength feels like weakness.

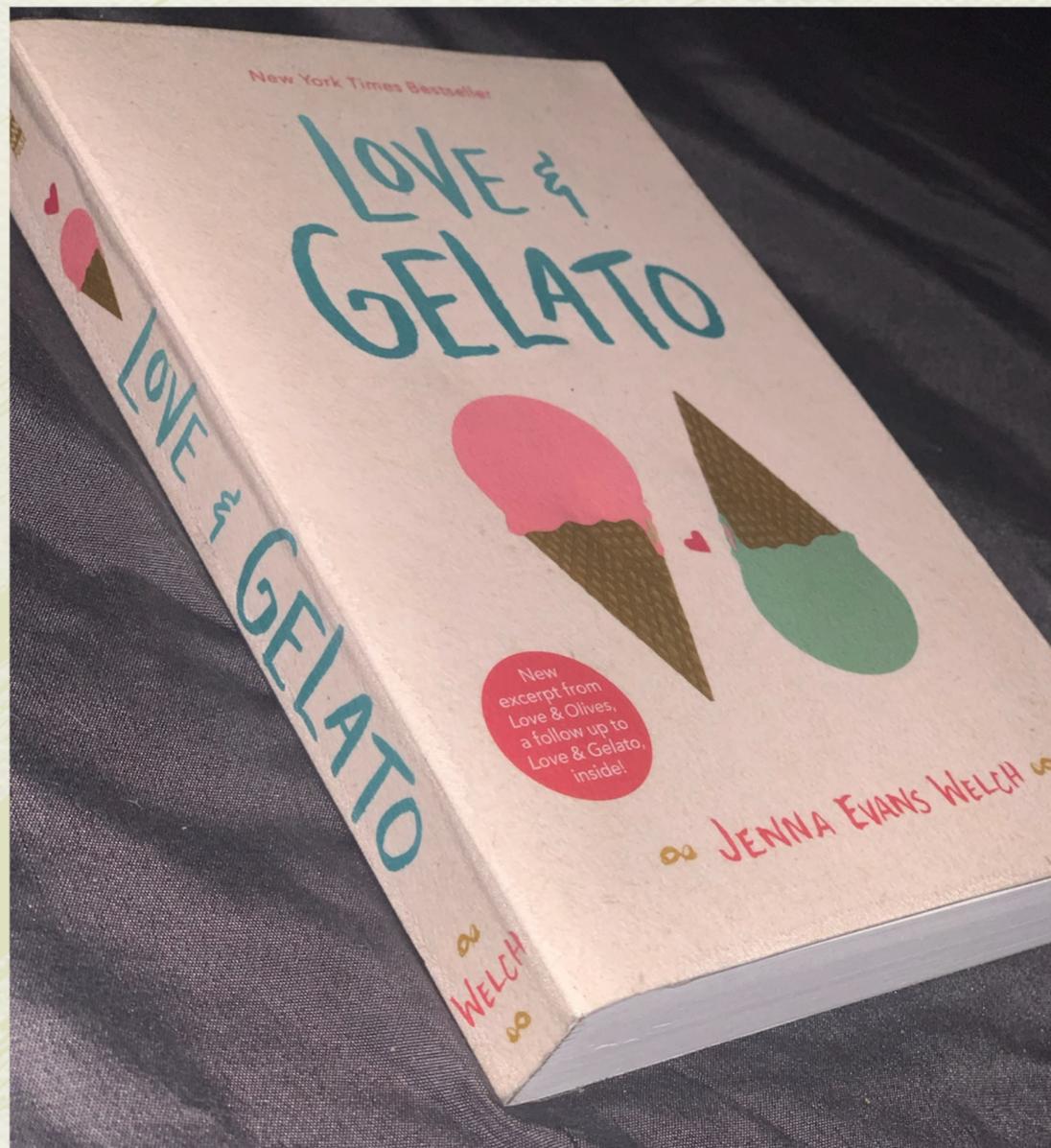
It is never easy to tell your truth in anticipation of a gentle understanding smile or nod when in actuality you are faced with a furrowed brow or a tilted head. It is never easy to speak your truth especially when the reality of those words holds a truth you never wished was your own.



Description of photograph: I took a photo of a tissue box with flowers in the background (blurred out with portrait mode) to represent how right now, I'm going to be sad and I accept that but flowers often represent new life, and I'm able to see how this change is for the best.



I chose to take this picture because I think it illustrates my struggle with anxiety and depression effectively, and it was a recreation of a picture I took a while ago. The original picture was taken after a really hard day. I had an hour before I had to leave for practice, so I chose to lay in my car. I felt completely hopeless in that moment, and I took this picture as a reminder of the struggle. My feelings are represented through the almost dark valley the trees create keeping me from the bright happiness that is the bright, blue sky. This matches how anxiety and depression are the main drivers that have prevented me from being happy for the longest time.



"It was her mother's dying wish that she get to know her father. But what kind of father isn't around for sixteen years?"

I purchased this book early this year. I hadn't gotten the chance to read it so one day I picked it up and read the book's synopsis because I had forgotten why it had caught my attention. My timing in choosing to read this book could not have been more terrible. I decided to read this book two weeks after the passing of my biological father. I never got around to actually reading it though. I just looked at it. I couldn't bring myself to do it. I couldn't read about a character that I related to. I could read about this random character getting answers from her father knowing that that is no longer a possibility for me. This book is a reminder of that. As you can see I haven't gotten rid of the book but I haven't read it either. I keep it around hoping that one day I'll have the courage to open it and read the words on the pages.

Photography activity:



My dad left a few years ago and we haven't connected since. The blanketed window represents my uncertainty during that time. It wasn't clear how I should act or feel or what things were okay to express.



I saw a flower that had missing petals and connected it back to when I felt like my family wasn't whole. I believed the stereotype that a family is supposed to have both a mom and a dad and I had just lost that sense of security.