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I grew up in the shadow of my older brother. I was just the little sister of Lafaele Paselio, the all-star football jock, who was one of the popular kids in school. I was never in the spotlight. I felt unimportant. I had no identity of my own. A potato with nothing on it is pretty bland, and that’s how I felt. It was really depressing because I knew I have so much to offer.

Stepping into college wasn’t as exciting for me as it probably is for most people. Sure it was a new journey, a new experience, but for me, it was just another place to be called Lafaele’s little sister. My brother had just finished a year at Windward Community College in Kaneohe, Hawaii, and everyone there knew who he was. Now I was once again in his shadow. Even though my brother had transferred to a university in San Diego, California, I knew I was bound to fall into the same situation I had experienced throughout my life. Once again, I was just Lafaele’s little sister.

In my Introduction to College class, we learned tips on how to succeed in college. The class had assignments to write journal entries from the *On Course* book. A journal that was particularly meaningful for me was the one where you wrote a conversation between you and your Inner Guide. Your Inner Guide was supposed to use good listening skills to help you come up with a solution to a problem. It was funny because while I was doing that journal I realized I had the solution right in front of my face, and the conversation with my Inner Guide brought it out. I realized I am in charge of my life. It doesn’t matter what others think of me. I fell in love with who I am and what I can do with my life. There are things I’m good at that Lafaele’s not good at. I love my music, and I want to be a high school teacher.

I also saw how good listening skills will help me be the kind of teacher I want to be. I want to make students believe that they matter. I want them to feel important. Some of my teachers have really listened to me and made me feel that I matter. A teacher who doesn’t listen sends the message that what the student thinks isn’t important. That the *student* isn’t important. I remember when I disagreed with my philosophy teacher one time, and he told me to explain why. Then he kept interrupting me and telling me I was wrong without even letting me explain myself. That made me feel angry, and I’m never going to be like him. I’m going to listen to people. I tell my friends if I interrupt you, tell me to stop. I want to listen to the people in my life so they know that what they say is important to me.

With the help of the Introduction to College class, I learned that I can find answers to the problems I face. I just have to listen to my Inner Guide, to myself. It is my choice to let the fact that I am Lafaele’s sister get to me or not. I can now say that the person I am today is a lot stronger than the person I was yesterday. I don’t have to be the bland potato any more. I am Teroa Paselio, that’s it! No one’s sister, no one’s cousin, no one’s namesake, but Teroa Paselio! After writing that journal, I walked into school on Monday singing to myself “I’m feeling like a star, you can’t stop my shine!” I can definitely say I’m no longer living in anyone’s shadow.

1.The American president Theodore Roosevelt once said, “Comparison is the thief of joy.” Teroa discusses how constant comparisons to her brother made her feel badly about herself. Have you ever experienced negative feelings as a result of comparing your life to another person’s life?

2. Teroa ultimately discovered the power of active listening. She channeled the negative feelings of worrying that “no one noticed her” into a deep appreciation for the power of attention. Active listening is going to help Teroa become a better teacher. How could greater focus, attention, and active listening help you in your own life? Be as specific as possible in your response.