

Dear Reader,

My parents moved to Australia from Mexico before I was born. I was born in Brisbane and we were living in Teneriffe but I don't remember that apartment. But then we moved to this house in New Farm. It was really big. It had a verandah at the end, and I remember I had all my toys on one side, and the rooms were in the middle of the house. And then the other side was the kitchen and the dining area, and outside it had a really big garden, but you had to wear shoes because the grass was really spiky and thorny.

Then when we moved to the apartment just down this road, I remember I had a pram, a toy pram, and I was lining them up before all the beds were there and my mum said, "You're going to have to move it because the beds are going there."

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In prep, I used to take things like quesadillas and tacos and salads and all this stuff for lunch. There used to be the table mats that we have in the kitchen. My mum used to send them to keep the food hot, and because at home we would set the table, so I would put the mat down and then put my food on top and eat it like a placemat on the floor. And there were people who sort of make fun, but I didn't really care. I remember that I told Mum, and then she told my teacher. Then there was this slide show on the board where my teacher showed us the different types of food that people ate.

My friends always have the same things for lunch. Like, my friend Harvey, she has the noodle snack, which is just dried noodles, and she breaks it and puts the chicken powder on. She puts it in her container, then she just eats it. And then she normally has a sandwich. She normally doesn't really eat the sandwich, and the only thing that's healthy are these vegetables. She just throws them in the bin, and she eats, like, three or four and then she just throws them and then puts the Ziploc back in her lunchbox. And then she has, like, a chocolate bar and then lollies and stuff, like chips. Anyway the best lunch is always the one with the most lollies. That's how it is.

I like having my food but sometimes I would like chips or something. I feel a bit left out because my friends, they're always trading stuff – like, they'll say, "I'll give you three chips for half a bar," or something like that, "I'll give you half my thing." But they'd just give me one chip instead of three chips because they didn't really want what I have.

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At school every year we have Harmony Day where they have all the flags. So a few weeks before, what you do is you tell your teacher which flag you want to walk behind, the nationality. Then the oldest person from that nationality carries the flag and you dress up like that. And I was the only Mexican, so I was holding the flag but it was really good and fun. And it's fun to see where everybody's from.

My friends are a mix of races. My friend Zoe is Australian, and my friend Harriet – like, they're all born here, but Harriet is Greek and Australian. Another one is Maltese and Irish and Australian. And then my other friend, she lives in Italy, but she comes over sometimes, like, for a term, and then she goes back to Italy for her parents' work. She has Italian accent and everything. So I find I can relate more with her.



I think the way I interact with my family is quite different from my friends. I remember my friend saying that she hated to sing and dance in front of other people, but for me I wouldn't really sing in front of other people unless it's like close friends or family. But for her it was not even in front of us or in front of her family. She wouldn't do that.

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I recently went back to Mexico and at first it felt a bit strange, but it only took a couple of days to get used to it for me. My Spanish improved when I was there. And I remember at the end when we were driving back to the airport in Mexico City, I remember thinking in Spanish. I remember thinking, "I'm going to go on the plane, I'm going to read something, and then I'm going to watch something," but I remember doing that in Spanish, and normally I would say that in English in my mind.

When we went to Mexico, it felt like there was two places where I could belong because it felt like I lived there too. I had my whole life there too. But then here, I also feel like I belong. I feel like when we met our cousins and our family in Mexico, it felt like I'd just known them forever even though we haven't even seen them in that many years.

It feels like the whole community in Mexico, it seems more free and because their families are together. There's more a sense of community in Mexico. Like when you say hi to your neighbour when you're passing by, here you just go "Hi" and in Mexico, it's like, "Hi! How have you been? Blah, blah, blah." And you would give them a hug or something.

Nicole