My experience with my younger sister passing away was horrible, but it has helped me be a better person for my students at Girls Inc. One student, a 4th grader, was not always interested in my classes. She didn't enjoy science, math, or engineering, and it was difficult to keep her on task for the majority of the semester. I knew from seeing her work in the tutoring center and on homework that she is an incredibly bright young girl, I just wasn't sure how I could help her trust me as an educator. A few weeks ago, I shared with the older girls that my sister died of suicide. They were all empathetic and concerned, including the student mentioned previously. She ended up approaching me after class and discussing her own struggles with mental health with herself as well as other family members.

After this student opened up personally, her work in class became more focused. She was able to vocalize her specific needs in class, as well as her own goals for what she wanted to learn in STEM class. It pushed us into a larger conversation about her future and what she wanted from life professionally. We ended up doing a lesson on a stormy day during our extra time! She chose a chemical reaction slime experiment over watching a movie, which would have never happened a few months ago. I'm so excited to see what the summer holds for this student as well.