

I have a universal rule:

“Don’t tell me things I shouldn't know. I’m not a good secret keeper.”

This is the warning I give to all my friends. Errrr, rather ex-friends. Why? You and I both know the reason. Sorry but I’m just bad at keeping secrets! My dad confessed to me that he didn’t love my mom anymore. You know what I did? I opened my mouth and blabbed to my momma about what he told me. I know it's messed up but why does a 46 year old man have to confide in a 7 year old? I was just trying to ask him about addition but he went on and on about how much he loved this other woman. He got mad at me but I told him he needed to pay up in Barbie dolls and I didn't get any after a week of holding onto his lil secret.

My momma always warned:

“JUNELLA MARIE JENNINGS YOU NEED TO LEARN HOW TO KEEP  
YOUR MOUTH SHUT!”

I think she was just trying to dampen my vibes after I told my daddy that momma’s been spending the money she’s supposed to use on me and my brother for going out with her girls and buying clothes she doesn't need. Oooo was she mad! Why does she get so upset when I’m just telling daddy the truth? Momma’s always the one telling me I have to be

honest because honesty is the best policy. Isn't she a hypocrite if she's the one saying that all while getting mad at me for being open about what's really happening? She's done this so many times yet she's preaching to her friends about how she's just a hard worker. Yeah right.

The school bully beat this into me:

“You should shut up. You talk too much. Don't tell any teachers about this or else. Got it?”

My tooth was knocked out so I couldn't exactly hide it. Both my parents made up momentarily to take me to the hospital. I didn't feel anything except apathy. I should keep my mouth shut all the time. Nothing good ever comes out of it. I couldn't talk for months because I couldn't cope. Therapy was the last resort.

After 6 sessions, I listened to my therapist for once:

“Junella, you're a very smart girl but I need to be blunt with you. You can choose to be a product of your environment and blame everyone but yourself, or you can make the choice to be accountable for your actions. It's up to you to make that decision for yourself, not anyone else.”

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I think that was one of the first times I broke down into tears. I haven't remembered what crying was like since I was 5 years old. I've always been defensive and angry because I couldn't understand any other emotion. Those were the only feelings that I was familiar with. I couldn't let myself be happy because every time I felt an ounce of happiness, I felt like it was taken away immediately. Being listened to for the first time in forever felt like a huge relief. I went from drowning silently to tugging on that lifeboat once more. I finally felt like my voice wasn't my enemy for once. I can talk.