

The icing on the cake

1. Claudia Alvarez' parents came to the US as poor immigrants. You are going to hear Claudia and her mother, Blanca, talk about the family's early days in the country, and the difficulties they had. Look at the pictures and try to guess what Claudia and Blanca will say about them.



2 Now watch the video and put the pictures in the order you hear about them. Were your guesses correct? Explain the meaning of each picture in the story.



3 Watch and listen again and answer the following questions.

- 1 Why did Claudia's parents take her to the office?
- 2 Were they allowed to take the children with them?
- 3 Why did the family eat a lot of bean tacos?
- 4 What does Blanca regret about Claudia's childhood?
- 5 How does Claudia feel about her childhood?



4 Discussion questions

- 1 Do you admire what Claudia's parents did? Why/why not?
- 2 Why do you think her parents didn't explain why they were having tacos every night? Would you do the same?
- 3 Look at this quote from Claudia. What does she mean by 'icing on the cake'? How important is education to you? Why?

'So, it's the most important thing for me having gone to college and I feel like anything I do from here on out is ok because I've already achieved my dream. Everything else is icing on the cake.'

5 Grammar

What words can you make by combining the words in the two boxes?

any some every no	one body thing where
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Do these pairs of sentences have the same meaning, or different meanings?

- 1 I have memories of running into everyone's office and eating candy..
I have memories of running into someone's office and eating candy..
- 2 Is there anything you've never told me, but want to tell me now?
Is there something you've never told me, but want to tell me now?
- 3 If you could do everything again, would you raise me differently?
If you could do anything again, would you raise me differently?
- 4 I thought there's nothing that could stand in my way.
I thought there isn't anything that could stand in my way.
- 5 I feel like anything I do from here on out is ok.
I feel like everything I do from here on out is ok.
- 6 Everything else is icing on the cake.
Something else is icing on the cake.

6 Complete the sentences in ways that are true for you. Compare your ideas with a partner.

- 1 Someone I really admire is.....
- 2 Everywhere in my country is...
- 3 Everyone in my class is.....
- 4 Nobody in my class is....
- 5 Something I'd really like to do in the future is to..
- 6 I don't really like anyone who....

7 What do you think are the most important qualities you would like to pass onto your children? Check the meaning of the words in the box and discuss in pairs. Add any other qualities you like.

patience working hard self-confidence determination kindness enthusiasm ambition



Transcript

A: What kinds of jobs did you have since first arriving in the country?

BA: We were gardeners. And we were cleaning offices.

CA: I remember the offices.

BA: You remember that? We had the night shift cleaning that's why you know we had to take you and your brother. I didn't have a babysitter.

CA: I have memories of running into **everyone's** office and eating candy from their candy dishes. I remember being with my brother in our pajamas with the little plastic feet. And I also remember you would always buy us a cup-of-noodle from the vending machine, like a snack, and then put us to bed on people's office couches and then you'd carry us to the car when you guys were done cleaning the offices. I remember that. Did they ever know? Did your bosses ever know that you took your kids?

BA: No, I don't think so.

CA: Is there **anything** that you've never told me but want to tell me now?

BA: When we first came here we went through a lot of things like not eating...

CA: Oh...

BA: I guess for 6 months your father lost his job but we never told you that.

CA: I do remember a lot of beans. Bean tacos.

BA: But when you ask us why the same thing... remember?

CA: Yeah yeah.

BA: I didn't want to tell you why.

CA: If you could do **everything** again would you raise me differently?

BA: I would dedicate more time I guess. You know, I was so busy going to school too that I guess I neglected you a little bit.

CA: No. For me watching you go to school with 2 kids and trying to make ends meet that was the biggest inspiration for me to finish college. I thought there's **nothing** that could stand in my way that didn't stand in yours more. So. it's the most important thing for me having gone to college and I feel like **anything** I do from here on out is ok because I've already achieved my dream. **Everything else** is icing on the cake.

Key and notes

2

C (Blana and her husband worked as gardeners during the day), D (they cleaned offices at night), E (the kids ate candy from people's candy bowls), G (Blanca bought them pot noodles from the vending machines), A (they went to sleep on the office couches), B (Claudia finished college)

3

- 1 Because they had to work the night shift and couldn't pay a baby-sitter
- 2 Probably not- Blanca says the bosses didn't know.
- 3 Because they couldn't afford anything else.
- 4 Not spending more time with the children.
- 5 That her mother was an inspiration to work hard and achieve.

4

'icing on the cake' means something good that happens in addition to a situation which is already good.



5

anybody/one (no difference in meaning) anything anywhere

We use any in negative sentences (I don't want anything) and when it doesn't matter which person, place or thing.

sombody/one (no difference in meaning) something somewhere

We use some when talking about a more specific person, place or thing.

everybody/one (no difference in meaning) everything everywhere

Note that everyone etc takes a singular noun. E..g. everyone is

Nobody/one (no difference in meaning) nothing nowhere

We use no to give a negative meaning. If the sentence is already negative, then use 'any' - see question 4 below.

1 I have memories of running into everyone's office and eating candy.. (all the offices)

I have memories of running into someone's office and eating candy.. (one office in particular)

2 Is there anything you've never told me, but want to tell me now? (I don't have a specific thing in mind)

Is there something you've never told me, but want to tell me now? (I do have a specific thing in mind)

3 If you could do everything again, would you raise me differently? (I'm talking about all the things you did)

If you could do anything again, would you raise me differently? (I'm asking you to think of one thing, though I don't have a specific thing in mind)

4 I thought there's nothing that could stand in my way. (these two have the same meaning)

I thought there isn't anything that could stand in my way.

5 I feel like anything I do from here on out is ok. (It doesn't matter what thing I do)

I feel like everything I do from here on out is ok. (all the things I do)

6 Everything else is icing on the cake. (all the other things- note that we often use 'else' with these words)

Something else is icing on the cake. (a specific thing)

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