



Total Trial Solutions

Emily [REDACTED] Biography

Case 103861-1

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GENERAL BACKGROUND/FAMILY

Emily Ann [REDACTED] was born on October 24, 1994 in Lake Arrowhead, California. Emily is the only child born to her father, Joe [REDACTED]. Her mother, [Laurie](#) [REDACTED] had three children from a previous marriage at the time of her birth.

Laurie describes young Emily as being “extremely curious, observant, active, creative, and extremely bright.” She was raised in a loving household where both parents were present, along with her three half-sisters, Carrie, Kristen, and Caitlin, who are all much older than her. “Everyone loved having a new little baby around,” Emily says. “I brought them together, which was good.”



Emily’s childhood was filled with trips to Disneyland and other outdoor destinations. “We used to have a little camper,” Emily says. “We did a lot of travelling because we lived in California. It was that sort of thing where if you go an hour, you’re in the mountains or you’re in the desert or you’re at the beach.”

Around 2005, when Emily was eleven years old, she and her parents moved from California to Long Island so that her mother could be closer to her parents. Emily has remained in New York since then. She currently lives in New York City, where she is a student at NYU. “New York is definitely my home,” she says.

Laurie [REDACTED] and Joe moved back to California in 2012, shortly after Emily began classes at NYU. The two currently reside in Los Altos, California. Laurie works as a Spanish teacher,

while Joe has worked as general contractor for most of life. When Emily is not attending classes she travels to California to visit her parents.

Emily's half sister Carrie currently lives in Miami. Catlin resides in Washington state, and Kristen lives New York, only twenty minutes from Emily's dorm room. Emily remains close with each of her sisters, especially Kristen, with whom she shares many of the same interests.

EDUCATION

Education has always been Emily's top priority. "I think I just happened to get lucky," she says. "I enjoy it." According to Laurie, Emily has "always been a very serious student. [...] She never had to be asked to do her homework." Her film studies teacher, [Ken](#) [REDACTED] offers insight when he says that Emily is "thrilled and delighted in showing up, being engaged in her class work, [and] just engaging with her classmates."

After moving from California to Long Island, Emily was accepted into the [REDACTED] School.¹ "I loved school. School was my number one, always has been. It still pretty much is," she says. [Debra](#) [REDACTED] works as the director of curriculum and professional development and the dean of cultural history at the [REDACTED] School. Debra met Emily during her freshmen year and describes her then as being "bright," "driven," "focused and joyful." Debra says that Emily "had little challenge in terms of her academic studies. It seemed relatively easy for her." Even as her coursework progressively became more and more difficult, Emily excelled in her studies. Laurie says that Emily was "always at the top of her class." Emily also credits the structure of the curriculum at The [REDACTED] School for her academic success. "We had a history-based curriculum, so everything I was studying in history tied into what I was studying in every other class." She

¹ For more information on the [REDACTED] School please visit the school's [REDACTED].

gives the following example: “In ninth grade, we studied the Renaissance, so in science, we did dissections and talked about the Vitruvian Man. In art, we were drawing stuff, like Leonardo. [...] Everything’s connected, so you’re thinking on a theme rather than in a discipline, which I really like.”

As a freshman and sophomore Emily enjoyed and excelled in her math classes in particular. “I loved math,” she says. “I was at least a year ahead.” Emily says math “was something I’d never had a problem with [...] That was something that totally clicked with me all the time.” As a sophomore, Emily was enrolled in statistics and pre-calculus.

Emily took several dance classes throughout her tenure at the [REDACTED] School. Her dance teacher, [Sheryl](#) [REDACTED] fondly remembers Emily being “one of the best students I’ve ever taught,” she says. “She was a lead dancer in every single class she took.” Sheryl served as mentor for Emily. The two shared a close relationship throughout her high school career. As a freshman and sophomore, Emily often shared her plans for her future with Sheryl. “She loved to dance and she loved to do art, but really, she was pursuing an intellectual future of a career,” Sheryl says.

During grades nine through twelve, Emily opted to participate in travel courses offered by the [REDACTED] School. “Every year, our school stops in between the second and third trimester, and for a month, you can either take a course on campus or you can go off campus and do a travel course,” she says. In ninth grade, Emily traveled to Morocco to study photography. As a sophomore, Emily was selected to travel to Egypt and Turkey as part of a curriculum building trip. “We made films, and took photography, and wrote stuff, and brought back objects to infuse into our curriculum, in all the different years when they would study Egypt or Turkey.” As a

junior Emily traveled to Ghana to study dance, and as a senior she went on a road trip to the southwestern part of United States, where she continued her studies in photography. When asked what she enjoys most about traveling, Emily says, “I like seeing new things. I like watching the way that people live. I like filming and photographing. I love showing what I’m seeing.”

Emily graduated from The [REDACTED] School, with a 4.0 GPA, and was subsequently accepted into Gallatin, The School of Individualized Study,² at New York University in 2012. “I don’t have a major, but we’re also interdisciplinary,” she says. “The kind of thing that makes me really excited about learning is not just pulling yourself into one thing, but understanding things from a more broad perspective.”

During her freshman year Emily took two courses at Gallatin: “The Social Construction of Reality” and “Utopia: Imagining New Worlds.” She read the works of Plato and Descartes, among others. “We had to read 60 pages for every class, which meant 60 pages of Plato in two days,” she says. Writing was also part of the required coursework. Emily wrote several critical thinking papers. In addition to the courses she took within the Gallatin curriculum, Emily also took two dance classes and a photography class during her first semester at NYU.

Emily hopes to one day establish a career that would allow her to combine “media and performance, dance and theater, photography and videography,” she says. “That’s what excites me the most.”

² For more information on Gallatin, please visit [their website](#).

ACTIVITIES

As a child, Emily developed a love for acting. “I used to do commercials in L.A.,” she says. “I would go to auditions a lot of the time.” Emily appeared in commercials for companies like Texaco, Pledge, and Pillsbury just to name a few. Emily always looked up to her older sister Kristen, who is an actress, and says, “I always wanted to be an actress with her.” In 2012 Emily got her chance, and traveled to Edinburgh, Scotland with her sister Kristen and the theatre company she is a part of. Emily worked as an intern at the Edinburgh Festival utilizing her photography and acting skills. “It was the most perfect thing I could’ve done,” she says of the experience.



Emily started dancing at age three or four. As she got a little older, Emily gave up acting and focused wholly on dancing. For many years Emily practiced Irish dancing. “I competed and moved my way up through the ranks, which was fun,” she says. Laurie says Emily “was a great dancer,” when she was young.

Emily enjoys reading for fun when she is not reading for school. Laurie remembers that her daughter would, “pick up a newspaper that was sitting on the table. She’d pick up magazines. She always had at least one book going, usually more than one.” When Emily was young, she read *American Girl* magazine, *Vogue*, and *Seventeen* magazine. As she got older, Emily says she “went through a huge fantasy kick. [...] My sister and I read *Lord of the Rings* to each other, the theatrical one, and we made up all these voices and stuff. Each different character, or each different place that a character was from had a different voice.” Laurie describes Emily as being a “really fast reader. She’d get through big fat books in a couple

of days.” [Chris](#) [REDACTED], Emily’s art teacher and mentor when she attended the [REDACTED] School, says Emily “always was reading a book. When she wasn’t doing her homework assignments or doing stuff in school, she would always have a book.”

Emily enjoyed spending afternoons after school volunteering in her school’s garden. “I



was enthralled in the idea that you could grow your own food,” she says. “I have a really huge passion in the idea of food being local and organic and ethically-created and grown. I try to eat as much sustainable, good food as possible.” Emily recalls the afternoons she spent watering plants, weeding, and developing the infrastructure of the school’s garden. She smiles when she says the cherry tomatoes were her favorite. “They’re like candy,” she says. “You eat them, and it’s the best thing you’ve ever tasted.” Emily’s time in the garden changed her

perspective on the foods she ate. When she was in 8th grade she chose to become a vegetarian.

“I’m actually dairy-free now too,” she says. Emily is currently a member of the Community Agriculture Club at NYU. “We have a garden. It’s a lot smaller than my high school garden, but it’s really cute,” she says.

In her free time, Emily enjoys spending time with friends. Unlike other kids her age, who might have spent their time watching TV or playing video games, Emily describes the people in her circle as sharing her interest in ideas. “In high school, we did a lot of philosophizing,” she explains. “We would sit around and be like, ‘What is this? Where are we?’ We all would gather at this one house. It was where we hung out, and we would sit around and play music.” Emily says she got along well with kids a few years older than she was, and that she preferred them to people her age. “I always hung out with kids who are older than me, so that was fun because they were wise and could talk and think.”

EMPLOYMENT

Emily worked summers at the █████ Summer Program. “It’s a hoity-toity, posh summer camp in the █████,” she says. “But it’s really fun. A lot of my friends worked there, so that was a fun way to spend your summer. I was a sailing instructor last summer [...] I spent every morning sailing.” In addition to working at the camp, Emily says, “I also babysat all the time.”

THE ACCIDENT

On the afternoon of May 25, 2010 Emily was working in the garden of her high school. When she was ready to leave school for the day she thought about walking the few blocks it would have taken her to get from the school to her house, but instead chose to catch a ride home from her friend Olivia. “My lapse in memory starts before I even saw her,” Emily says. “I don’t remember getting into the car. I have no idea where we had parked.” Emily and Olivia exited the parking lot of the Ross School and were traveling southbound on Rte. 114 in East Hampton. Olivia had come to a complete stop with her left turn signal activated attempting to turn onto Montauk Blvd. when Emily remembers hearing the words “That’s a big truck!” and then blacking out. Olivia’s Honda Civic was struck in the rear by a large truck, which demolished the vehicle upon impact.

Emily’s head struck the front of the car during impact, which caused a large laceration. When Emily regained consciousness she remembers feeling “really confused like my body was kind of outside of my body.” Emily was still in the car and says “I vaguely remember them pulling me out.” Emily’s memories following the accident mostly consist of sounds, rather



than images. “Everything I remember is from my ears. [...] My vision was really weird,” she says. “I can’t really remember anything that I was seeing.” What images Emily does remember appeared to her in black and white, she says.

Chris came upon the scene of the accident. He approached Olivia’s vehicle where he found Emily lying across the driver’s seat of the car. “When I first saw Emily, she was laying across the front seat with blood all over her face. She also had pieces of glass all over her body.” Chris waited as paramedics tended to Emily at the scene. He rode with her in the ambulance to the helicopter. “I remember asking him, ‘Am I dreaming? Am I dead?’ Then, I asked him, ‘Did *Pippin* happen?’ which was the school show that I had just done, which I was very enthralled in mentally, I guess.” Chris remembers that Emily “kept asking if she was dead and if she was dreaming.” Emily was taken by ambulance to an awaiting helicopter and then airlifted to Stony Brook Medical Center.

Emily has only vague memories of the remainder of the day at Stony Brook Medical Center. After being examined by ER doctors, Emily was given stitches in her head to close off her laceration. She had also fractured her right wrist, which was put in a splint and later casted. “I guess I was conscious for all of this, but I had no memory of it,” she says. Emily was released from the hospital the next day.

LIFE AFTER THE ACCIDENT

Emily returned to school the following week. “I was really anxious to go back to school,” she says. “I felt the need to be okay really quickly and bounce back, so I did. I threw myself back into everything very quickly.” With only a few weeks of school left after the accident,

Emily's teachers waived her final exams. "I was a straight-A student, so they knew that I didn't need to take my finals to prove to them that I would've passed," she explains.

That summer, Emily filled her time with "scheduled activity," she says. "I made sure that everyone knew I was fine and that I knew I was fine," she says. "It wasn't until later that I started to see there was a lot of things that had changed."

THE ACADEMIC STRUGGLE

Before Emily's junior year of high school had even started, Laurie noticed something was different about her daughter: "For the first time ever in her life, I said to her, 'Emily, you know there's only a couple weeks until school. I haven't seen you doing any of your summer reading.'" As the first day of her junior year neared, Emily says, "I tried to do my summer reading. I sat down to do it, and I couldn't do it. It was taking me forever. I got headaches, and I had a panic inside of me, and I was like, 'I don't know what's going on.'" Laurie remembers that Emily had a hard time explaining how she was feeling during this time. "She didn't want to explain it. She didn't want to talk about how awful it was. I really had to draw this out of her to understand exactly what was happening." Laurie goes on to explain, "It wasn't that she couldn't read. If you asked her to read out loud, she could read. She could have read a whole paragraph, but she couldn't have told you what it said. Her eyes were working and her brain was working, but they were not working in unison."

Emily's junior and senior year were far less enjoyable for her than her first two years of high school. "Reading in eleventh and twelfth grade was not something that was fun at all. It was a huge struggle," Emily says. Emily discussed the issue with her teacher and mentor Sheryl. "It was very hard for her to understand what she was reading," Sheryl says. Sheryl made

accommodations for Emily in class. “I would never ask her to read, because it was a problem for her,” Sheryl says. “When I would give things to students in a dance history part of the course, I began to realize I had to make a point of giving her something that she could watch on YouTube or something that we could discuss that I could explain to her.”

Laurie did everything she could to help her daughter succeed in school. “I purchased audio books for her,” Laurie says, something she had never done before. Emily says, “My mom helped me with my homework a lot in high school [...] She did a lot of reading of complicated material to me so that I could be taking notes. If I try to read it myself, I can’t get through it.”

Emily’s reading problems have continued to cause her trouble in college. Her core classes during her freshman year at NYU she found “had a lot of reading,” she says. “I was thoroughly overwhelmed. It was terrible.” These struggles have also caused Emily to abandon all attempts at leisurely reading, which she once enjoyed.. “I never read for fun, ever,” she says. “It’s just too time consuming,” Laurie adds. “She only reads what’s necessary [...] That’s the biggest change that I see. It’s just her trying to live a life without reading.”

Because of her difficulties with reading, Emily started seeing a neuropsychologist, Dr. [REDACTED]. “He suggested that I get books online, or my iPad. I got an iPad for school now because I read words so much better digitally.” Emily says she currently reads digital text much more quickly than print, because her iPad allows her to make the words appear much larger than they do in print.

Reading wasn’t the only problem Emily encountered. She began experiencing trouble concentrating and focusing while in the classroom. Emily says she found “it was exponentially harder the second two years” of high school, beyond what would be expected of the typical

progression to more challenging subject matter over the years. Debra recalls that several of Emily's teachers spoke to her about the problems Emily was experiencing in the classroom. "Her junior teacher, cultural history teacher, and her senior teachers had remarked to me that she had told them that she had difficulty concentrating for extended periods of time, particularly reading or doing writing," Debra says. "Textural work would sometimes give her a headache, but the difficulty was that it was just difficult for her to focus and maintain concentration for a long period of time." Debra served as a mentor to Emily during Emily's senior year and worked closely with her on her senior project. "It was just difficult for her to organize, to sequence in terms of textural things in particular," Debra says. "She would often excuse herself and just say she just did not feel up to it at a certain time, and that happened frequently. That never happened when I knew her in 9th grade." Debra remembers a shift from academics towards the arts as a focus for Emily's senior project. "I think she had other plans for her senior project, but she stuck with dance because the physical activity was something that she could handle, and she could do that for extended periods," Debra says. "I think that really altered her direction in terms of how she thought about school in the future, her career, where she applied, what courses she would take; and I think for her, performance became what she felt she could do best."

Ken [REDACTED], Emily's media studies and film production teacher at the [REDACTED] School, remembers that during her eleventh and twelfth grade years, "she wasn't as active in class participation, [or] in class discussion," Ken says. "She did need extra time to finish her work pretty regularly. I saw that continue." Chris remembers feeling as though her "confidence, really was shaken. Her perception of her ability changed. She felt limitations, and I could see her getting very frustrated."

Emily's difficulties at school worsened when she began developing headaches during her junior year of high school. She says they can come at any time, but they are especially common when she adjusts her visual focus from near to far and vice versa. Laurie offers some insight into this issue saying that "when she looked up at the board, and then looked down at her notes she just immediately got an excruciating headache that would last sometimes the whole rest of the day.[...] She couldn't function because the headaches were so bad." Emily's teacher Ken recalls Emily's complaints of headaches as being "frequent or a regular complaint that I never noticed or saw or experienced before," he says. "I noticed a major shift in her complaining about headaches after May 2010."

Emily began struggling with math beginning in eleventh-grade. She had already completed Statistics and Pre-Calculus, and was enrolled in AP Calculus and AP Statistics for her junior year. "The first week, I couldn't do the homework," she says. "It didn't make any sense." Despite her struggles, Emily initially remained in her math courses and says she earned "okay" grades. Unfortunately, she also felt as though the amount of effort she was putting in to keeping up with math would cause her to fall back in other areas of her studies. "I will work until I make something make sense," she affirms. "I will figure it out. I will find the answer. But it was not a healthy situation. It was taking me so much time, and I wasn't having any time to sleep, and it was making me really anxious." Laurie saw Emily struggling with her math homework in the wee hours of the morning and took the matter into her own hands. She spoke with the staff at Emily's school and told them she wanted Emily to drop math. "They really fought me on that. They said, 'You know she's wanting to go to Harvard or other places. There's no way in heck she's going to get in.' I said, 'Just let me worry about that. She'll write an essay about it. I'm not worried about it. She's done what she needs to do. She can't do this. It's too much and it's going

to put her over the edge.’” Emily jokes that, had she remained in math class, “it would’ve been the last thing I did. It would’ve killed me.” Emily has not enrolled in another math class since dropping those two courses in eleventh grade.

For the first time in her life, Emily noticed that her eyes had become sensitive to certain kinds of lighting. “I noticed being light-sensitive to normal lighting as soon as I went back to school,” she says. Bright harsh sunlight and fluorescent lighting came to trigger Emily’s headaches. Emily points to a several pairs of sunglasses sitting on her desk and explains that, “I have to wear sunglasses all the time, because I get headaches and it’s really painful,” she says. “I have my two super heavy-duty pairs of glasses over there, polarized Ray-Bans, and I wear hats all the time.” Emily says that when she is in class she situates herself where “there’s no direct source of light coming into my eyes.”

EMOTIONAL EFFECTS

Emily’s academic struggles have taken a toll on her emotionally. She experiences increasingly high levels of anxiety when she reads because she knows how challenging this once easy task is for her now. “There’s a lot of anxiety connected to it because I know it’ll take me forever, and so, I start to worry about it.” That anxiety often causes her to put off her homework assignments until the last minute, which puts even more pressure on her to perform when they come due. Emily remembers she experienced far less anxiety over her studies before her injury, during her freshman and sophomore years of high school. “I would never have described myself as an anxious person before,” she says. “It’s a really terrible feeling [...] this certain kind of anxiety that’s like total helplessness. I feel like I don’t know what to do. I feel like you can’t fix it.”

High anxiety isn't the only thing that leaves Emily in a state of helplessness. "There's a lot of emotional stress connected to the experience of trying to get through my homework or my schoolwork. The first two years of high school, I wouldn't say I stressed. I definitely tried really hard, but the second two years were more 'doggy paddling' and trying to stay afloat as opposed to knowing my goal and getting there."

"The first two years of high school, I wouldn't say I stressed. I definitely tried really hard, but the second two years were more 'doggy paddling' and trying to stay afloat as opposed to knowing my goal and getting there."

Even when Emily received help from her mother, the anxiety remained. "It felt like it was taking longer because someone else was reading it," she says. She admits that being dependent on others to help her with reading was a significant cause of the anxiety.

THERAPY THROUGH DANCE

Sheryl remembers that Emily became much more involved in dance after the accident. "She shifted her interests, because she could no longer be part of some of those stronger reading heavy intellectual classes, like philosophy and cultural history. She moved all this more toward an arts," she says. According to Emily, after the accident "I was in the studio six days a week." During a very difficult time in her life, Emily says dance "was something that I could do really well." Emily had become accustomed to achieving her goals, and the dance studio was a place where she could continue to do so without worrying about headaches or anxiety. "I had always been really good at school. I had always been top 10%, and then, suddenly, I couldn't read, and I couldn't do things as quickly, and stuff wasn't making sense, and I couldn't take math. I wanted something that I was good at and progressed at." For Emily, dance serves as "a huge part of my,

self-recovery process.” According to Sheryl, Emily “really shifted her awareness because she was able to still find freedom in that [dance] and not frustration, whereas when she read, she was really, really frustrated.” Sheryl says that for Emily, “dancing was definitely therapy in many ways.”

A BRIGHT FUTURE

Emily is currently settling into her life in New York City. “I love the city more than I ever thought I would,” she says. Emily feels certain she will remain at NYU until she graduates, which she expects to do on time in 2016.

While most young adults her age are looking forward to a summer away from their studies, Emily is applying for an internship at the Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival in the Berkshires. “Pretty much all of the biggest dance companies go through there,” she says. “There’s two different internships that I’m applying for. One is a photography and one is videography at one of the most prestigious dance festivals. I would be a photography or a videography intern, taking pictures or making films about all of the dancers that come through this amazing, amazing place.”

Using her free time to apply for an internship is typical of Emily’s work ethic, and she’s relying on it more than ever as she continues to recover from her injuries. Emily says that after all she’s been through, “I have a more heightened sense of awareness of myself, and the way that my brain is working, and what I’m doing.” Her mother Laurie sums up her situation perfectly, when she explains that “from the outside, nobody would look at her and think that she had a problem in the world. She’s smart, she’s pretty and she’s talented in so many ways. She’s articulate. She’s vivacious, but inside she’s knowing that she’s making decisions. She can’t do an awful lot of things that would have still been options to her. She was always interested in the

arts. Darn good thing because that's what she can do [...] It's not like this accident has made it that she can't have a perfectly good life, but it has definitely closed a lot of doors that I think she would have considered."

Witness Index

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