

I was diagnosed with 22Q11.2 Deletion Syndrome during the most intense time in a young adult's life: thesis semester in college, when things should start manifesting. Clicking. Though the diagnosis was a disruption, it also came at the best time. After a week-long stay at a psychiatric hospital following a mental health crash, I had what I like to describe as an awakening. The awakening was like a new awareness of my capabilities despite doubt, fear, and worry. I'd stumbled upon an old sewing machine buried in the rubble of closet stuff, and remembered who I wanted to become: a designer. An artist. Today, I have reached my potential, yet I continue battling symptoms, facing risks, and dealing with setbacks as well as rewarding triumphs. But there are certain aspects of life we shouldn't strive for, and my story follows an alternative path, one that I now view as extraordinary. How we think and feel about ourselves is as significant as the words we say out loud. Through fashion, I've been able to find purpose and happiness by collaborating with causes for 22Q11.2 Deletion Syndrome including my tailoring and alterations business. My story exhibits the ways in which I got to this place, found my happiness, and live life to the fullest.