

# IDAHO YOUTH SPEAK

IDAHO YOUTH COMMISSION

SPRING 2020

## Life Support

By Anna Makwera (cont. pg. 8 and 9)



You are not on this journey alone; there are people cheering for you. Life can throw curve balls or put bumps in the road, but they are all able to be overcome. It takes a strong person to be able to cope with what you are going through. It might feel like people do not care about what is happening, but they do. My brother was in juvenile detention and on probation when he was only 13 years old. Not only did my brother have to cope with it but our family was also coping with him being in there.

## Transitioning

By Ian O'Connor (cont. pg. 4)

Transitioning from a residential treatment facility or a juvenile correction facility is an exciting time. What has been your life for the past few months or few years is going to be dramatically changing. You may hold the most anticipated excitement in little things such as eating what you want when you want, or the ability to choose what your day will look like. Some of you may be excited to enter the world of work, attend college, taking a stab at learning a new skill or trade, or living on your own. These are all great things to look forward to and embrace once you are out of the door, but unfortunately your mind may not be as excited about the stress of transition and managing new responsibilities.



## Understanding Bullying

By Thomas Wada (cont. pg. 4)



Throughout my years in school, I've experienced bullying firsthand. It started as early, as I can remember, all the way up until I graduated high school. It ended up causing a lot of trouble for me. I didn't know how to deal with it. I tried to get the teachers and the principal involved, but nothing ever came from it. If anything, it only seemed to make things worse for me. Words never seemed to do anything. I thought my only option was to fight. But, I'm the one who had detention, because I was caught fighting with one of my bullies. I felt as though the system had failed me. I was the victim; I shouldn't be punished for that. I was angry. I wanted to feel better about myself. I started making fun of some less fortunate kids.

It felt nice to be the one people were laughing with, instead of laughing at. I didn't even realize what I was doing was wrong. I just wanted to feel like I wasn't the bottom of the totem pole anymore, that there were still people beneath me. It took a long time for me to realize the error of my ways. It took even longer to realize I was only contributing to the cycle by taking my frustrations out on people who did nothing wrong. According to [stopbullying.gov](http://stopbullying.gov), there are two types

# Dear Delilah,

By Heidi Mulder

I have been having overwhelming emotions lately and can't seem to control them. Some days I can't stop crying, some days I hate the world and everyone in it. Most days I feel just fine. But those days, when the emotions take over, are hard. Often times, they will cause me to act out of character and I always feel worse after; mentally exhausted and sometimes shameful. Do you have any advice on how I can start to get a better handle on those days where I feel I have no control?

*-Lost and Losing it*

Dear Lost and Losing it,

The first thing to remember is that you are not alone and that this happens to everyone! And while it's easier for some to "catch" themselves before they lose it, a lot of us flat out miss the opportunity. I have personally struggled with this issue, I still do, and I have helped my teen daughter through this as well. It is a struggle, day in and day out, to be aware of your feelings and outward emotions. Something as simple as the tone in someone's voice could set off my emotions, and I would completely lose composure. One thing that I try to remember during these difficult moments is the "Three R's."

- Recognize. What is triggering your emotions? Acknowledge the thoughts that pop into your head, and the emotions that you are experiencing.
- Refrain. Take a moment to process your thoughts and feelings before reacting.
- Relax. Relax your body, breathe deeply. Counting your breaths to ten can help you focus on breathing when it's hard.

If a response is necessary, the Three R's allow us the opportunity to do so in an appropriate manner. By working through this three-step process, we are able to gain control over ourselves and respond to the world around us with a calm and clear mind. Remember, we are only in control of ourselves. Start building your toolbox for success, include coping mechanisms, advice, tips, tricks, and healthy ways to release stress and other difficult emotions. Choose what works for you.

*-Delilah (Heidi Mulder)*

## Life

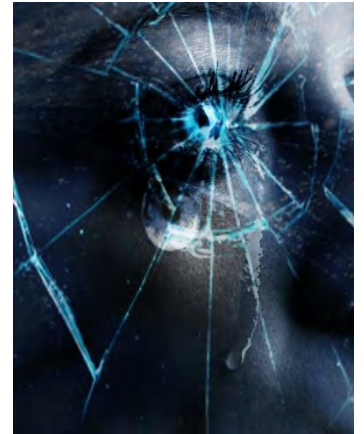
By Steve Helms (cont. pg. 5)

Life, a twisting, turning road that happily throws the unexpected at you along the way. No one ever promised it was going to be easy but, through the darkness, it can be an amazing, joyous ride. It will be difficult, it will take time, but that effort will reap benefits unimaginable, on the other side. Life hit me quick and fast when I was young. At 17, my 15-year-old brother passed away in his sleep. At 18, my best friend passed away in his sleep. At 28, my 10-year-old brother passed away. Two months later, my uncle unexpectedly left this world too. Before my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday, I lost my dad. Each one of these moments were devastating and shaped who I am today.

## Beaten into Success

By Chris Thelander (cont. pg. 5)

Homeless. Neglected. Beaten. Insulted. Overlooked. Undervalued. These words were common for people who grew up where we did. While others may deal with gunshots, gangs, and violence on the surface, the upbringing we survived dealt with more internal issues that were not so easy to spot or overcome. Difficult, especially, if you had a rough time understanding whether it was normal or not. You do not receive sympathy when the damage cannot be seen, so recognition that certain behaviors were wrong, were not commonly reinforced. It is well known that many successful, and well-known athletes come from rough



# The Return:

by Christoph Siegmund

I walk forests, keeping my wits, whimsy.  
Pondering thoughts, trapped by tunes of outer realms.  
Animals. Seeking eyes. Searing my humanity.  
My story, as it was told. As it was heard.  
Over and over, as it never was.  
Trees. Elder, all knowing. Stoic.  
Wrinkled without warning, Lifelines etch as I pass.  
Written in blood and bark. Branches push and swipe at me.  
Pushing me further, into darkness.  
Howling. My ears perk. Voices follow.  
They are close, chasing.  
Weak knees, screeching stomach.  
Feet running. Deeper in the ditch.  
I fall.  
Crawling. The rodents have come.  
Slipping. Palms slide against the dirt.  
The road was so close,  
Once before. How did I get here?  
Vines pull at my ankles.  
Relaxing. It hurts less. No work.  
My head turns to earth, body sinks in.  
Black sky. Turning blacker.  
Distant. I am gone. The world buries me.  
Sleeping with vermin. I am burrowed. Forgotten.  
My slumber holds no heeding. Whispers fill my dreams.  
Nightmares swallow my concerns.  
A humming bleeds them together.  
Day and night. Awake and sleeping, the same.  
Stretching, aches all over. Crawling.

I forgot how. The whispers have turned,  
to scratching. So close. I reach.  
It must be the end. Reach. Scrape. Pull.  
Clutching dirt, spitting gravel, a hole opens.  
I am crawling. Crawling. Mud fills my lungs.  
Futile, I feel alone. My words have left.  
Screaming from my guts, the walls shake.  
Silence.  
“Crawl. Crawl now.” The whispers are back.  
Inching past roots. Rocks. “Keep crawling.”  
Louder. Whispers. In front of me.  
Me. My voice. I am crawling.  
I hear footsteps above now. Closer.  
Small feet.  
A black hare sits. Eyes to eyes.  
Long ears waiting for me.  
I try to explain. The black hare turns,  
Hopping up the hole. My head drops.  
“Keep crawling.”  
I look up. The hare is waiting.  
Waiting for me. I follow.  
I stop. The black hare waits.  
I continue, further until the hole opens.  
Outside. It is bright.  
My feet struggle. Balance.  
The hare continues, to a stream.  
Moss tickles my toes on the banks.  
Water cleans my reflection.  
The black hare content, watching, I breathe.



## Bullying (cont. from pg. 1)

of people more likely to bully others: those who are well-connected to and hold social power over others, and those who are isolated from their peers and may have low self-esteem, depression or anxiety. I fell into the latter category. Growing up being bullied by other kids at my school had some long-lasting effects on my self-esteem. Without even realizing it, I started doing the same thing to others.

There are three main forms of bullying: verbal, social, and physical. Verbal bullying can involve teasing, name-calling, inappropriate comments, taunting, and threatening to cause harm. I remember so many times where I would tease someone or call them names without even thinking twice about it. I just thought it was funny but if I were in their shoes, I would be pretty upset over some of the things I would say.

Social bullying is similar but instead of addressing the person directly, you influence how others view the person. This can take form by leaving somebody out on a group activity on purpose, telling other people to not be their friend, spreading rumors about them, or by embarrassing them in public. Any of these things could hurt their reputation with others and end up further isolating them from developing healthy relationships with their peers. Spreading nasty rumors about someone has one of the biggest effects on their self-esteem and drastically effects how other people view them. I was on the receiving end of a particularly bad rumor in middle school. I lost a lot of friends because of it and I still haven't fully recovered.

Physical bullying is the most obvious form of bullying. It involves causing physical harm to a person or their possessions. This includes hitting, kicking, pushing, spitting, or breaking someone's things. Physical bullying not only causes physical harm, it can cause a great deal of psychological harm as well. Being on the receiving end of any instance of physical bullying can leave one feeling weak and powerless, which can have lasting effects on their self-esteem.

Bullying isn't just something that happens at school. It can happen on the bus, in the neighborhood, or on the internet. Cyberbullying is when bullying happens over the internet on social media, in forums, online gaming, text, instant messaging, or even email. The internet allows a flow of information 24 hours a day; because of this, it can be hard to find relief from being harassed online. Also, because of the nature of the internet, most things posted online are permanent and public. This can have lasting effects throughout an individual's life, effecting college and job applications as well as other areas of life.

Knowing the different types of bullying is the first step in preventing it. If you see someone being bullied, or you are being bullied yourself, it's important that you tell a trusted adult. A trusted adult will be able to offer advice, comfort, and support even if they can't solve the problem directly. Show kindness to other kids if someone is bullying them. **A little kindness can help stop the cycle of violence and prevent others from suffering from the devastating effects of bullying.**



## Transitioning (cont. from pg. 1)

Leaving a certain lifestyle behind, such as being in a facility, can have its drawbacks. In each facility there is routine that you adapt and become accustomed to. Sometimes that routine is a rotating menu, wake up times, group and school times that are often not created by you. While this may be a drag at times, you almost always know what to expect and what is expected of you. Most of these scheduled activities such as meals, educational service, fitness and recreation are ones that you may plan on participating in on the outside, and you decide when they are done. Rather than having a set time to do these you will now get to enjoy the task of juggling activities in accordance with importance.

While this may sound daunting and like its task heavy, you will soon be excited to know that while you must work, you will choose where you work and what to eat on your lunch break. The same can be said about recreation. You can decide whether you want to jog throughout the neighborhood or pick up powerlifting as your way of implementing fitness. This list could go on because having freedom of choice allows you do whatever you want, something you haven't been allowed in your previous lifestyle. Now that you are thinking about the freedoms of being a citizen you should be aware of an easy way to prioritize life so you can get the most from it. (continued on pg. 7)

## Life (cont. from pg. 2)

It's important to note that my situation is not unique. There are many people who face plenty of difficulties along the way. However, each event can be a learning experience. It sounds cliché, but everything that happens to us is what we make of it. We can take troubling times, difficult circumstances, and learn to transition our life after these. Learning to cope, accept, and reevaluate situations will be the most valuable tool.

Everyone finds different ways to cope and learning positive outlets can be life changing. Those outlets can be running, lifting, writing poetry, listening to music, or find a passion that improves your mood. There is no weakness in struggling with the stress of day to day life. Strength comes from knowing your limits and giving yourself the room needed to cope. Take time for yourself and embrace happiness. These are the things I wish I had learned when I was younger.

For years, I ran as fast as I could from the pain of losing those I love. I ran, and ran, until I wasn't fast enough any longer. After I lost my dad, I went down the same road I watched him travel after my brothers died. Each night, after everyone was asleep, I would wash my pain away with alcohol. It wasn't long before I realized I had a real problem and I wasn't helping myself. I thought I was weak for not being able to deal with this. After all, I wasn't the only one who had lost people they loved so who was I to whine. One night, glass in hand, I decided that I needed real help. For the first time in my life, after half of it spent running from my pain, I walked into a counseling session. I didn't know what to expect. I sat there uncomfortably, face to face with a stranger, not sure how I got to this point in my life. One sentence turned into one minute, one minute into one session, and one session into a journey.

This journey taught me things I hope others can learn easier from my mistakes. Needing help isn't weakness and, admitting you need it, is courageous. **Be courageous and pursue happiness with every fiber of your being. Our current situations do not define our lives.** This is merely a place and a chapter in a long story that hasn't been finished.

## Beaten (cont. from pg. 2)

areas of violence and gang activity. And while they are not advertised, do you think it is normal for a Physicist to have dealt with those first six words the entirety of he entirety of their childhood years? Studying to become a

Physicist takes lots of focus, research, reading, and discipline. I did not deal with quite the same upbringing and I am having a difficult time just sitting in one spot and writing this article, and this individual does research for fun.

A Physicist is defined as being an expert or a student in Physics. Physics is easily defined as the science of how things work, for example, cell phones, televisions, or vehicles. It is a very complex degree to get and the work required of a Physicist is not that much easier. The position this individual, we will call him Leonard, earned was described as dealing with "science-fiction-like weapons." The first word that I said after hearing that was a 15-year-old version of myself saying "COOL!" When I think about wanting to do the same thing, I lose interest because I think of how unattainable that type of a job/career is for myself to get. Then, I hear his path, and it is not an easy one, but it is a path that a common 17/18-year-old can follow and do whatever it is they desire without anyone preventing them from doing so.

Leonard was not the best student. He was smart but there was more than just smarts that prevented him from getting good grades. He found out that he could get into the Army with a GED and decided to go that route instead of waiting until he was 18 and graduating high school. He went into the Army as an infantry member at 17, deployed several times, eventually getting an opportunity to be an Arabic Interrogator, and signed up for another 3 years after his initial enlistment was completed. He later became a teacher after his years overseas were over and he got out of the Army becoming a civilian. He continued his education with the benefits he received from the military and after years of working, classes, and determination, he Commissioned in the United States Air Force as a Physicist and is continuing that education to this day.

This is not an outline or the "how to" of how to be successful, however, it is one person's journey about how he overcame what was holding him down. It is not impressive that he is a Physicist, but where he came from, the adversity he overcame, and the maintained concentration to pursue his degree is the part that I find inspiring considering my life involved many of the same obstacles as Leonard's did. The reason I used this individual's journey is that it is one I attempted to follow myself, without near the same success, but I am still fighting to meet my goal and I am 36-years old. **It is never too late to get your life moving in the right direction.**

(cont. pg. 6)

## Just Say No to Bullying!

By Emily

Imagine a sugar packet like you would see on the table in a diner. Now envision dumping all the sugar out onto a table. Once the packet is emptied, you try and pick the sugar up with just your hands to put it back into the packet. Definitely way harder than dumping the sugar out in the first place, right? It is the same way with our words and actions. It is easier to say and do things than it is to take them back once they have been said and done.

No matter who you are or where you come from, there are many things in life that we have little to no control over. Other people's actions, the weather, aspects of the future, the past, different health issues that may arise, etcetera; just to name a few. How we choose to react to these situations, and how we treat others along the way, are for the most part, within our control. The same way you may be going through situations that are in and out of your control, you never really know what someone else is going through. People may appear to be fine on the outside even, but inside, they may be struggling. Many times, people say or do hurtful things to others because the nature of their actions and words mirror how they are on the inside. Sometimes people bully others because they too have been bullied before. They may be hurting or have been hurt, so they feel like they need to hurt others or warranted to hurt others. They may be focusing on the things they can't control in their own lives, so they try and establish control over other people they feel are weaker than they are. Whatever the case may be, when people intentionally target others repeatedly, it is no longer just being mean. (cont. pg. 8).

### Beaten (cont. from pg. 5)

Leonard and I lived next door to each other, yet, dealt with different forms of abuse. The abuse I suffered was verbal and emotional abuse and emotional neglect, which causes more issues than people recognize. That was just at my father's house. While at my mother's house, I was a product of a druggie mother, with a living environment that probably should have killed me. So, since I was young, I spent most of my time outside or at friends' house's avoiding whatever issues at any of my parent's houses. I did not have the worst home life, but one that did not provide much of a learning environment or an encouraging one at that. My next-door neighbor and I, though opposites, had the same goal of making it out of our environments and doing something more productive, drug free, and satisfying. I barely graduated high school and did not know until after my finals that I would graduate because my grade point average was so low. Since then, I have been taking college classes without really knowing what I was interested in doing with my life. I pursued degrees blindly, and after 17 years of schooling, I finally came to what it was I wanted to do with my life and am diligently pursuing it.

My life is not something I would sell to anyone as a success story. I'm not exactly sure anyone would. However, I am not on drugs, never tried anything harder than marijuana. My mother and father drank a lot and I rarely touch the stuff. I joined the military and have been in for 12 years. I am honest, it costs me friendships and even family relationships, but I can look myself in the mirror and justify my decisions. The people in my life are positive and good people, at least I think so. My life has been hectic and stressful, and after seeing a therapist and dealing with my past, I am happy with my life, as simple as it is. I rent a room and have few possessions, but I am happy with it, and by that description, I am a success. **Being able to be happy and content with my current life and promise in my future is my definition of success, what's yours?**

## The Power of Goal Setting

By Haley

As a teenager it can feel like everyone is always talking about the future. "What do you want to be when you grow up?" "What college are you going to?" "Have you taken all the steps to be prepared?" When I was growing up, I remember being asked all these questions and then some. It seemed like deciding and choosing a path were more important than what I actually chose. During high school instead of focusing on the future I decided to focus on the present. This meant that I spent most of my time hanging out with friends and going out to events instead of studying and participating in school activities. My senior year I realized I still didn't have answers to those hard questions and no goals set for my future.

After high school I decided to attend a community college because I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life. Everyone said just go to school and you will figure it out, so that's what I did. I spent three years earning my degree as an Associate of Sociology. At this point I had a huge realization, I still had not set any goals for my future. I had a degree, but with no real focus for a job in the field I had studied. I was lost and had just as little direction in my life as when I finished high school.

At that point, I needed a huge change. I felt like I had been living for everyone but myself. I decided to stop just going through the motions of what I thought was expected of me, and really reflect on what I wanted. The idea of leaving Idaho had been on my brain for some time (cont. pg. 9).

## Transitioning (cont. from pg. 4)

Unfortunately nothing is free, so you need to be thinking about what needs to happen in order for you to keep a roof over your head, food on the table, appointments met, and your health in check. Regardless of what you do when you get out and are on your own you will need to find a way to support yourself, and that may not be glamorous or a walk in the park. Entry level jobs can be grueling but often are only temporary, however, they can pay the rent and bills until something better comes along. Realizing this can help propel you through a rough time and it screams reliability to future employers. While income is a very important building block to your foundation, your health should also be ranked as a priority.

Creating time a few days a week for recreation and fitness will also play a huge role in your success with independence. Exercising offers an outlet for anxiety, down time, and allows you the opportunity to set goals that can impact your self-esteem. Most fitness routines don't do much unless the person is eating right, so it's important to take the opportunity to learn what is best for what your goals are (your wallet will thank you too). Another side of health that cannot be neglected is recovery and emotional wellbeing.

Recovery and mental health make enjoying life possible. For some reading this, mental health and recovery might mean taking some time to relax, exercise, or talk with a friend. For others it may mean weekly counseling, daily Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous meetings and working with a sponsor. This may be the most crucial area of health to focus on because many of you have been through something traumatic, whether it be before your time in custody or the process of being in custody. If you do not address, understand and find a way to move forward from the past it could become your present once again. You won't feel the excitement about that forced lifestyle change!

Looking back at what you have read may seem like a daunting task, however, it is only a realistic suggestion. There are numerous things that you can do when you get out but focusing only on activities of instant gratification as priority will most likely set you up for frustration and smaller portions of success. Even when you prioritize the critical things in life (food, shelter, health, etc.) you will still have **time to discover hobbies and hidden talents, thus, making your new life less stressful.**



## Now I am old in your eyes and blind in mine

By Jamie Harrell (cont. pg. 10)

I was fifty-one years old at the time I wrote this article. Most likely to the average reader I am an old man. I say that mostly because I was once in your place. To clarify not only was I once as young as you and thought people my age were really old.

Now I am old in your eyes and blind in my own. One day you hopefully will be my age as well and realize at that time it is not that old in comparison to what life remains. As far as being blind, that is a very recent thing. In fact three years and thirty eight days. How I ended up blind is something I will share with you in due time. Before we get into that let me tell you what I can in the little amount of space to share with you.

I was born in August of 1968 at Saint Luke's Hospital in Boise, Idaho. I had a good and healthy home the best I remember until I was five years old. At that time my mother who had been having an affair with a man ran off with him in the middle of the night. I still remember that night like it was practically yesterday. That night was the end of my happy childhood and anything remotely resembling healthy and secure.

Over the next nine years, my brother and I spent our time moving and hiding from my father because our mother didn't want us to see him out of spite. In fact, from birth until the age of 14, we lived in fourteen different places and went to fourteen different schools. In two of those fourteen places we were pretty much camping with no utilities and not enough to eat. We didn't even have a house to live in. At times, my brother and I ate dry dog food and raw potatoes to hold off our hunger.

By the time I was a teenager I was a mess. I felt unwanted, unloved, and alone in the world. Two days before I turned 14, I heard my father had passed away. I'm not even sure (cont. pg. 10)





### Just Say No! (cont. from pg. 6)

According to Psychology Today, at this point, it becomes bullying. As of 2017, the National Center for Educational Statistics has determined that across the nation, about twenty percent of students who are between the ages of 12 and 18 have experiences bullying

In order for these numbers to decrease, it all starts with you. What YOU say matters. What YOU do matters. YOU matter. It is important to know how to identify bullying and what to do if you encounter bullying. Bullying comes in all shapes and sizes. There is no age limit for those who bully or their victims. People get bullied because of physical appearances, race, abilities and disabilities, their life choices, etc. Some of the reasons are aspects of people's lives that are completely out of their control. Any time you are intentionally physically harming someone, verbally abusing someone, socially bullying, and cyber bullying, you are affecting the lives of not only the victims, but the people who care about them, and bystanders as well.

So how do we prevent bullying? We don't condone the act as bystanders by laughing, watching without intervening, antagonizing bullying, etc. It is important to be one less person in the corner of the bully, unless you are trying to help them become a better person to prevent further bullying. If you can, try and befriend the person getting bullied. Often times, people feel like they must hide who they truly are to avoid standing out and possibly becoming a target. They may isolate themselves, turn to drugs and alcohol to cope with everything, they may attempt to hurt themselves or others physically, etc. It all depends on each individual and their tolerance level.

### Life Support (cont. from pg. 1)

While my brother was in juvie, my mom was the only person who could go visit him, it was really hard for the rest of us. As his older sister I wished there were more I could do to support him. I wanted to be able to protect him and make everything go away. I think my biggest fear was that I did not want him to think that our view of him changed. My view never changed of my brother, he was still my amazing little brother that I would do anything to protect, and I love him and still wanted to see him succeed. It was difficult knowing that he felt alone. I even felt alone because I was helpless, knowing I couldn't protect him from this one. We all wanted to support him but there were consequences for his actions that none of us could take away. We were all waiting to give him the support when he got out and was going through this process. For my brother, the best support he had when he got out was a support system that he could depend on.

After he was released, my brother expressed how frustrating it was to be in there and not knowing how it was going to affect his life when he got out and what he was going to need help with. When he got out and was coping with the changes he had to make. It was difficult to set healthy boundaries for my brother, he wanted to stay in contact with all of his friends he had previously before going into juvenile detention but also knew it wouldn't be in his own best interest, which was difficult for him to cope with. Our family also had a hard time with this because we wanted what was best for him without telling him what to do, we also wanted him to know we trusted his decision. To cope with it my brother looked to role models he had in his life including teachers, friends, or family. He also had hobbies to keep him busy when all of this was going on to try and find himself and make new friends in what he liked doing. It was a rough journey for him and our family because it was hard seeing him struggle.

This is a very important topic for me. People who I deeply love and care about have been bullied over the years and it really hurts when you know the person being targeted. You know their heart and intentions, and someone just decides that they are not worthy of being respected for one reason or another. I am working towards becoming an elementary teacher, and in my classroom, and with any students I encounter, I will have a very strict zero tolerance policy for any act even resembling bullying. It can have very serious long-term effects on victims as well as people who witness it. It is very important that you know that asking for help when you are bullied, or when you see someone bullying others is not wrong. You may be strong enough to let things go and not let things get to you, but you may be saving the life of someone who may not be as strong as you are, who may also be being bullied by that same person or others. You can tell someone in confidence if you fear for your safety or the safety of others. Saying things back fuels their fire. Getting a rise out of you is what they want. Choose to take the high road and walk away. Getting physical will get you nowhere. When you are safe and away from the bully, seek help or guidance from an adult you trust. You are not wrong for doing this. You are brave and you deserve better. If you are the one who has bullied others, admitting your wrongdoings, and asking for help is admirable. It is never too late to change your ways. **Whether the bully or the bullied, change starts with you.**

Reference:

What is Bullying? Stopbullying.gov.  
<https://www.stopbullying.gov/bullying/what-is-bullying>



Setting goals was critical as it helped my brother and family to keep him accountable for what he wanted to do. For my brother he had big goals like being successful in school and being a diesel mechanic, he also loved art and used that as a hobby. I think the biggest thing for us was knowing he could do it but it had to be his decision and that was really hard for all of us because it meant we couldn't solve it all; we just trusted him and believed in him which ended up being enough to help him. The best advice I can give is to talk to people, let people know what you need from them or how they can help. You will see that **there are a lot of people cheering for you and that believe in you.** Your families still care about you and want to see you succeed.

### Goal Setting (cont. from pg. 6)

I wanted to experience the world outside of my comfortable bubble in Boise. I then decided I was going to do something big, leave everything I knew and move to Hawaii.

I was so excited when I came to the decision, I elatedly told my friends and family. To my surprise it was received with very little excitement and a large amount of skepticism. I was met with questions like, "It's so expensive there, and how are you going to afford to live?" "What are you going to do for work?" and my personal favorite, "Aren't you worried about not fitting in with the locals?" I was shocked with the lack of support for my dream and started to believe them. Surprisingly, the most supportive person for my new goal was my mother. She told me I was young and had nothing holding me back, so why not?

That "why not?" statement pushed me to make a plan to achieve my goal. I realized the only person that had to believe I could do it was me. I decided to sit down and write out the details of how to make my dream come true. I created a budget in order to save enough money, I discarded the majority of my personal belongings, and I even went through the extensive process of moving my dog there with me. Moving to Hawaii was not only my first time on the island, but also my first time ever flying in a plane. The entire thing was scary, to say the least, but I was tired of fear holding me back in life. Soon after moving there I found a job in Volcanos National Park. I purchased a vehicle which allowed me the freedom to travel around the island at my leisure. I lived on both sides of the island experiencing the land, nature, and culture in many ways. After two years of living on the Big Island of Hawaii I felt like I had found a focus in life. I found a love for food and nutrition that has since led me on the path I am today to become a dietician.

I'm now sharing this story with you in hopes that it will spark some inspiration to follow your dreams. Through goal setting I was able to achieve something I never thought possible and there is power in the will to succeed. Finding focus and inspiration can be hard, and it's even harder to realize that any dream can become a reality with proper determination and motivation. As an adolescent it can be hard to concentrate on what dream you may have

when you feel like life in itself is tough. With the pressure of school, friends, and family all weighing down on you pushing and pulling in all different directions finding a focus may seem impossible. I'm here to tell you that any dream is worth reaching for and is attainable with proper goal setting techniques.

Keeping in mind the concept of SMART goals can really help in ensuring you stay on track with your goal setting. SMART stands for specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time based. The first step to achieving a goal is setting your mind to something specific. Once you know exactly what it is you want you can then lay out a plan to get there. Starting with a small goal can progress into something bigger. Next it is important to make sure your goal is measurable; this means you can track your progress. Attainability for me was just recognizing that with proper determination my goal was realistic. The relevance came from the impact it provided in my life at that time. Without action all dreams will only ever be dreams. Once you put tangible steps to reaching a dream it becomes a goal. When you put forth effort into achieving a goal it becomes reality. This can be applied to any aspect of life, whether it be to become a nurse, run a marathon, buy a car, or move to a tropical paradise.

For me it was important to focus on bettering myself in order to find the answer to all those questions I'd been asked as a teenager. The one thing I wish someone would have told me when I was younger was its ok not to know. It's ok to create goals to find out who you are, and that lead to finding out who you wish to become. **Small dreams can lead to big dreams and evolve into life plans.**



## Blind (cont. from pg. 7)

who I heard the news from. Two years ago, I learned he spent the rest of his life looking for us boys.

The rest of my youth was a train wreck. I fell in with the wrong crowd, dropped out of school, and much worse, ended up in Ada County Juvenile Detention. Later, I was in an adult jail in Lewiston, Idaho, because they didn't have a juvenile facility, followed by Juvenile Corrections Center in Saint Anthony, Idaho, where I spent sixteen months. I was able to get my GED, which was an extremely good thing. When I was finally released, I went home, which was the same way it had always been.

Now, up until I was a teenager, choices were made for me. I did not feel that I was responsible for those choices, but when I was about 14, about the time my dad passed, everything started going badly, and it was due to my choices. From that point it got harder for me because it was easier to take the route I knew so well. But I kept saying to myself, "only I can change my life, no one is going to come and magically heal me and do all the work for me." I knew I had to do whatever it took in order to get back on top.

That is exactly what I did. That person who used to be homeless, hungry, and a drug addict now owns his own home for eleven years and has other very nice things as well. What got me to this place was realizing I could not do it alone. I used the resources offered to me, which included counseling, vocational rehabilitation, drug counseling, and programs like cognitive self-change. I became a truck driver for a couple years in the oil fields and I made almost \$600,000.00. I decided that money was not everything and returned home and took a local job. Not making as much money, but you would be shocked at how well I was doing. All because of that GED and the new choices I had made.

Then on January first of 2017 after being the designated driver for some friends celebrating the New Year, I stopped and tried helping a drunk driver that had crashed in front of me.

While assisting that person, another drunk driver came along and hit us both. The person I stopped to help went through the windshield and died instantly. I was thrown and landed on the guard rail. After almost forty days in the Intensive Care Unit, nearly two months, and ten surgeries, I was officially blind. I felt my life was over. Then I stopped feeling sorry for myself. You see for a moment I felt that it was not fair. I did not do anything wrong. Nevertheless, I felt like I was being punished. That is not how life works. It is not what knocks you down that is important it is that you get back up and keep fighting for what you believe in and want.

Again, I had to make a choice. Continue to feel sorry for myself and just lay around. Or make a choice to get back up. I got back up. From March of 2017 until then end of that year, I had to learn to walk again even how to type again among other things. But on Jan 1<sup>st</sup> of 2018 that same GED in hand I started my first day in college. Not a clue how I was going to be a successful student with only a GED much less blind with no formal training whatsoever. Not even the school had any Ideas. That school had never had a blind student before.

I think this is my fifth semester and I am now at a different college. Even though my current college knows more than the first school I attended, they still lack some of the necessary knowledge and resources to make it a smoother learning experience for a blind student. I have learned to overcome my fears of speaking with faculty about what I need to be successful. I have started to advocate for myself and speak up when I need more help and to create a plan early on for success. With that in mind, I keep on fighting to overcome yet another trial. In the fall of 2020, I will take my next step by attending BSU. There I will be working to get to the point so that I can help people like you and me. Oh, almost forgot, last semester this blind ex-drug addict got straight A's and made the President's list. Mind you, I did not accomplish this on my own. I needed to ask and be able to reach out for help.

I have done nothing special. It is all about the choices we all make. Each of us is responsible for the path their life is on. **We have the ability to change paths. We just have to choose to do so.**



**GET INVOLVED! LOCAL  
JUVENILE JUSTICE COUNCILS  
ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR  
YOUTH MEMBERS.**

The Idaho Juvenile Justice Commission is a board of governor-appointed volunteers from each district working to **represent the interests of Idaho concerning its youth.** We, the Youth committee, are the heart and spirit of the Commission, made up of young adults who have experienced the situations that many Idaho youth currently encounter.

Visit [www.ijjc.idaho.gov](http://www.ijjc.idaho.gov) to learn more about your local District Council!

Contact the Idaho Juvenile Justice Commission Youth Committee:

Katherine Brain, staff (208) 334-5100 Ext. 413

[Katherine.Brain@idjc.idaho.gov](mailto:Katherine.Brain@idjc.idaho.gov)



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.





