

Spring 2021

Idaho Youth Speak

College of Western Idaho



Experiences with Mentors

Jessica Buchanan

A mentor is someone with either the experience or knowledge of how to help with guiding and advising others in a trustworthy manner. I have never personally been involved in the juvenile justice system, but as I got older, I began making bad mistakes, and those mistakes only got worse over the course of eight years when I earned my first felony charge. I went from abusing drugs and receiving two driving under the influence charges to abusing drugs and getting a felony possession, then later a felony intent to deliver illegal substances. I became a participant of the Ada County Drug Court Program and was a part of the program for two years before graduating.

The mentor experience I received was a part of a Twelve Step program called Heroin Anonymous. Being a part of this kind of program, it is vital to find a sponsor. A sponsor is much like a mentor through the Twelve Step program. A sponsor is someone that you choose because you admire them or maybe their story sounds much like your own, and they portray a life that you want to live someday. This person will then guide you through the twelve steps that help one to initially “clean their side of the street.”

When I got out of jail, I knew I needed someone to help me to stay on course, so I searched for a sponsor. Finding someone that you admire was not the hardest part, the hardest part for me was asking this person to sponsor me. I was in a very vulnerable condition since I just spent four months in jail. I finally found the one, and I decided my fear was what would tear me down once again, so I fought my fear and asked her. To my surprise, she said yes, and she understood that I was in Drug Court so having a sponsor and working the steps was a requirement for me to move forward in the program. I would meet with her every weekend to read the Big Book together (Alcoholics Anonymous) and we would work on my steps. She made it a requirement that I call her each day even if it were just to check in with her and tell her how my day was going. She quickly

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became someone I admired even more
the more time I spent with her.

She has been my sponsor now for almost two years and I still work closely with her, and because of the progress I have made with her, I have been able to sponsor others as well and to help them through their step work. I first became a sponsor in December of 2019 just after I got my one-year chip of sobriety when two girls asked me to be their sponsor. I will say, it was a terrifying thing to say yes just because you never really know when you are ready for that next step to help another. It was also a very empowering feeling to know that other women in my group looked up to me and that I inspire others around me to continue their paths of sobriety. So, I took that leap of faith and started sponsoring. As time went on, more women asked me to be their sponsor. Not every sponsee takes the time to go through their steps, which is unfortunate, but I have two women out of five that are, and it makes me proud to see how far they have come over this time.

Having a mentor, or in my case a sponsor, can be so beneficial to anyone, no matter their background. I believe highly that if I had a mentor at a younger age, someone that I looked up to and trusted to help guide me through things in life that I did not understand fully, I could have avoided the experiences that I have had over these last ten years. I am also a firm believer to not have any regrets in life, because the experiences we go through are what help shape us as people in later years. I was a much different person before my addictions began, and not necessarily a person that I would want to be today either, so I am grateful for what I have been through because it has opened my eyes to so much in life, and I do not take anything for granted. The little things truly matter. The time that I have spent behind bars has made me grateful for my freedom, for a comfortable bed to sleep in, I can eat when I want to, and I can talk to whoever I want to at any time of day without asking permission. I love my freedom and having a mentor to help guide me through my steps is what has kept me from going back to my old ways and losing the privileges that I have now.



I Am Poem

JT - IDJC Student

**I am the boy who wanders,
Tall, but not yet grown.
I wonder when the tides will change,
And carry me back home.
I hearing the dreadful slamming,
Of hardwood meeting gravel.
And, I see myself strolling down,
The road to often traveled.
I want myself to one day have,
The riches I've been told.
So, I am the boy who wanders,
Tall, but not yet grown.
I pretend to know my purpose,
And why lightning comes from thunder.
But I feel that I am trapped inside,
A not so perfect slumber.
I touched the Fruit of Eden,
And it tasted much too sweet.
I worry that the time will come,
When past and present meet.
I cry myself to sleep at night,
When I think I'm alone.
Yes, I am the boy who wanders,
Tall, but not yet grown.
I understand there will be a day,
When I finally learn to fly.
I say that day will take too long,
To come and pass me by.
I dream I will make a difference,
In the lives of those I love.
So I try my best to walk alone,
In the heat of the summer's sun.
I hope one day to give away,
The love I've been shown.
That's why, I am the boy who wanders,
Tall, but now yet grown.**

TURNING 18

Madison Carner

Turning 18 is an exciting milestone for many people. When I turned 18, I was so excited, and I felt relieved to have my independence. It felt good to become the sole person to make decisions for myself, but some of the choices I made were the wrong ones. I know when many people turn 18, you believe you need to do it by yourself, and it could come with many consequences. There were so many things I wish people told me about turning 18 that I didn't realize. When I turned 18, I was worried I would fail at being an adult. I strived for independence, so much so that I was determined to make it on my own without help. I have failed a lot, but there is one thing worse than failing and that is not trying. We all are human, and we have made many mistakes in life. It's about how you pick yourself back up and continue through the challenges. Remember you are not alone, and it is always okay to reach out and ask for help whether it be your family or community.

"Make sure you take time for yourself"

Iwish someone had told me to not worry about money. As an adult, I chose to work full time, as well as overtime to have as much money as possible. Working so much, I became a robot and I forgot how to live. Make sure you take time for yourself and have fun. If you don't have fun, your youth will be wasted, and you will regret it later on. One of the best advices I can give you is to open a savings account. If you put 10% of your check in your savings account, you will notice that you can save to go on vacations, or even have a backup fund if something happens and your out of work. I bank through ICCU, and one thing that helps, is I have central cents savings account. What that is, is any change you have left over from a transaction, the bank will round it up to an even number, and all that change will go in a savings account. It's similar to a change jar, just electronically. After a week of spending, I have roughly \$20 alone in my central cents savings account, and it is extremely helpful before pay day when I am in need of gas.



Friendship is another valuable lesson you learn in adulthood. You go from having so many friends in school, but soon they may become strangers. It can make you feel sad and lonely, but remember friends come and go throughout your life. Friendship is about quality, not the quantity. There are good and bad places to make friends. I found the best places to make friends are through work, or activities. You can find many friends through churches, the gym, art classes, and even the library. You would be surprised how more of a meaningful connection you will find with someone, when you meet them doing something you enjoy too, rather than a party.

Remember when you turn 18, you aren't alone. There is family around that loves you, and people who care for you. If you look at an adult in your life, you will see that we all rely on

other people. Independence is a huge thing, but remember that you are not alone. Remember to enjoy the beauty in things, and appreciate what you have because before you know it, it is gone.

YOU ARE WORTHY OF TREATMENT

—by Rachel Gonzales

It was difficult for me to start this article and I wasn't sure if it was because I was nervous or didn't want to revisit my past. Unfortunately, I was sitting in a juvenile hall at the age of 14. I never thought I would be there because of course I thought I was an invincible teenager but that was not the case which I quickly found out. The reason I went to juvenile hall was, drugs. Specifically, OxyContin and heroin. I met a guy that was a lot older than me that go me started on OxyContin and quickly turned to heroin. I am from California, so heroin was easily accessible just over the boarder in Mexico. I put myself in many situations that could have got me killed but by the grace of a higher power I am still here today. I continued with the same behavior and addiction for 8 years which led me from juvenile hall to chowchilla woman's prison in California. I strongly believe that if we treated our addictions and got the help, we needed that our juvenile halls and prison populations could be cut in half. You guys will hear many times that

“only 2% of addicts get clean and stay clean.”

I sat in many rehabs where my counselor would say “only 2 of you in this room will stay clean” and I didn't believe them because I always thought I would never relapse but each time I left within 30 days of leaving I would relapse and each time I just could not figure out why. The last time I went to rehab it was because I overdosed on heroin and had to be hit with Narcan 3 times to revive me. I knew this time was going to be the last time and it was because I finally decided to get clean for myself. Every time before that I was going because my parents or my probation was forcing me to get treatment but the final time, I decided I wanted to get clean for ME!

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I have now been clean for 6 years and I have 2 amazing children that are my everything. I hope that whoever is reading this when you decide you want to get clean you do it for yourself and no one else because sobriety is a learning process of yourself where you learn your triggers and your past trauma that continues to cause you to self-medicate with drugs. There are many resources for treatment programs that you will have access to, and I hope you use them because they are there for you and you are worth it!! You are worthy of treatment and the opportunity to live an amazing life clean and sober!!!

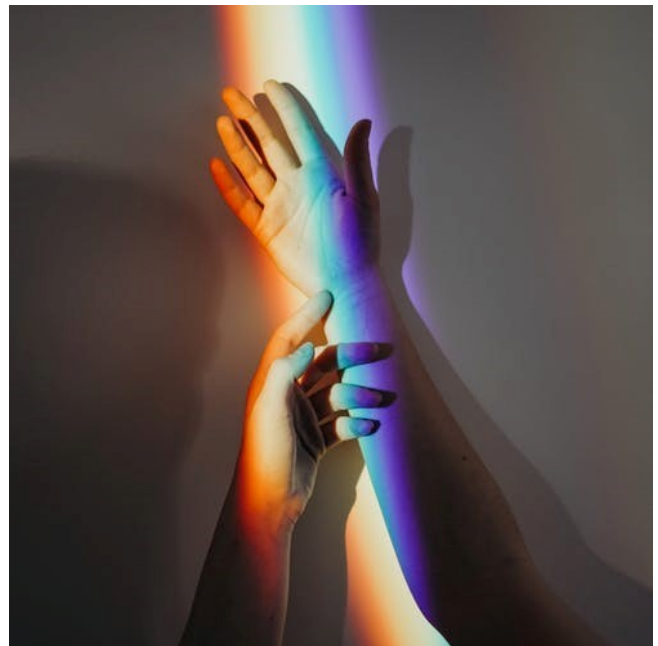


HELP For LGBTQ+

MJ Berlin

It can be difficult for a person to realize that maybe something is different than what everyone else thinks are normal. The normal we know has been socially constructed and as babies we are shaped by our parents or caregivers. Inside we all know who we are, or at least are searching for the truth. I can only imagine the pain that could come with feeling like you were made wrong. Adolescence and the teenage years were some of the hardest

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times I went through. With the awkwardness of puberty and then having to navigate through new emotions that came with all the hormones. Growing up can be traumatic even if nothing terrible happens.

When a person under the age of 18 decides that they are lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, pansexual, or identify any other way, it can be difficult to find resources to feel less alienated from their peers. It can be difficult to find people who understand the path you are walking on. Lucky for you, I have come across a great website that has a lot of information. At TCCIdaho.org there are some resources for everyone. In the drop-down menu listed Resources, there is a selection at the bottom for youth resources.

Locally in Boise on Sundays from 4pm-6pm there is a group that meets called Youth Alliance for Diversity. They provide a safe environment for education, socialization, and a sense of unity within the community. (tccidaho.org) The group provides a safe environment for youth to interact with positive adult role models, as well as peers. The group is open to all LGBTQ+ and allies aged 20 and younger. The group also has a Facebook page, BoiseLGBTyouth.

In Canyon County a group called The Alphabet Club meets every first and third Monday of the month at the Nampa Public Library on the third floor in study room 302. They also have a Facebook page, LGBTalphabetclub. They can also be contacted by email at LGBTabcyouth@gmail.com.

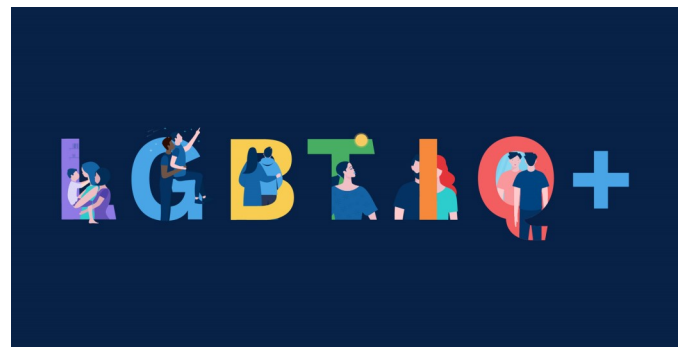
Meridian Library also hosts a group meeting for LGBT youth and allies. They meet at the Meridian Library every Friday at 5pm in the small conference room. Searching further, there are dozens of resources and groups that meet in Idaho. Based in Moscow Inland Oasis provides HIV testing/counseling organizes the annual Gay Pride Festival called Palouse Pride, and coordinates a youth program and community center (tccidaho.org).

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Probably the most important resource I came across is The Trevor Project. They provide crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBTQ youth. Their hotline is 1-866-488-7386. There is also the Genesis Project housed at the Idaho State University. More information can be found at their website, Genesisproj.com. Finally, there is the Pride Foundation, A Philanthropic organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community needs. Awards scholarships and grants to LGBTQA community in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. (tccidaho.org) More information can be found at their website at Pridefoundation.org.

Realizing that you are "different" from the social constructs of society can be extremely difficult for anyone at any age. I believe it can be more difficult at such a young and tender age. I have personal experience in this as I am an ally as well as a mother of a transgender pansexual child. I cannot say what it feels like inside my own heart to feel so wrongly placed. It hurts my heart for anyone experiencing it. The truth is, there is not anything wrong with you. There is nothing to be ashamed of or feel



guilty about. We are all so different and so unique that it makes me wonder how the constructs of the world came to be. I am here for you and I will advocate for your safety in this world. You are a beautiful human and I am your ally.

Works Cited: Stephanie, and Kel. *Tccidaho.org*, 30 Nov. 2020, www.tccidaho.org/



Breaking the Silence

—Sam Moore

It was always the same, day after day. Lights up, shuffle to breakfast, then school, lunch, recreation time, shower time, group, dinner, rec again, another group, snack time and if you were lucky you were a high enough level to stay up until 9 and do everything over again the next day. Every single day felt the same, days went into weeks, weeks into months. Before I knew it I had been here a year and at the same time it felt like forever. I felt like I was never going to get out. All the girls in my unit and I used to joke around about how I would be grey haired and wrinkled rocking back and forth in the corner telling the new girls "I remember when I was young..."

I would wake up, touch the frosted reinforced glass windows and wait for the sun to touch my fingers. I would count the cinder blocks in my room, count the tiny pores on each block and move to the next. I would trace the grooves making some new game, hoping to find some way to survive the overwhelming flood of emotions that came with learning just how dysfunctional my family was, how that dysfunction leaked into every other aspect of my life, and lastly I realized that the dysfunction was how I justified my actions. It took me a long time to realize that a lot of my problems stemmed from those unspoken rules that we all follow but don't really know why.

We all grow up with unspoken rules. It can be a lot of things from not burping at the dinner table to replacing the toilet paper roll if you used the last of it. In my home silence was the golden rule. We don't go crying to mom, we don't talk to cops, we don't tell teachers, and we suffer in silence. Ever since I was a little kid I could remember that being too loud would get you a beating, being loud after the beating would get you another beating and when mom got home you got another beating. We weren't allowed to cry because when kids cry they are loud and it's another beating. I often grew up hearing the phrase "I'm gonna give you something to really cry about here in a minute". I'm not really sure where I learned that silence meant strength but that's what we thought. I lived my life like that. When I slid face first into some kids knee cap playing kickball I shed a single tear and kept going. When I got hit by a car I cried out without shedding tears. When I felt the tears pricking my eye I would try and use whatever self-composure I had to fight back the tears and the emotions that came with them.

It was those silent rules that I had to tear down brick by brick. I had to do something that violated every single thing that I knew. I had to speak. I had to break the family rule. Even though I had broken it

several times and talked to police and talked to social workers, it was always in pieces. It was never the full story. It was never my story. I could feel the chaos and storm inside of me battering my insides demanding to be free. Talking about it should be the easiest thing in the world and yet every time I think about it I feel that oh so familiar pressure in the back of my throat. The words get glued to my lips. I am paralyzed. I can feel the sweat beads form on my face. I feel sick and nauseous and I think that for a minute I might collapse.

I honestly don't know how much passed between the inability to share and talking about those things on a Sunday night right before church. I don't remember why I shared or what sparked it. I just remember wanting to get my reintegration and needing to lead one more group to apply. I really didn't plan on sharing anything profound or deep about myself but secrets have a way of making you sick and I was tired of holding onto them all. I no longer felt like I deserved to suffer in silence.

"The silent rule dominated my life."

And so I started at the beginning. I went



from the scariest parts of my childhood to the most embarrassing to the night of my committing offense. Everything I could think of from my first kiss to the last time that my family broke my heart. I think that was the first time I really allowed myself to be fully vulnerable. It feels liberating and confining all at the same time. I felt better after that. It felt like some huge weight had been lifted. I felt deflated and exhausted. I wouldn't be surprised if there was a cry baby river named in my honor over that mental breakdown inducing moment. I didn't realize how much time had passed but I emotionally vomited all over my group. I'm pretty sure CHOICES could hear the background of the sisterhood of the traveling pants in between retching my soul and purging all the foulness that I carried with my silence. I remember physically feeling like I was rubbed raw all over. I felt beyond uncomfortable for the next few days but all in all I felt like a new person.

It was that moment that really changed my life. I know we all like to say we are tough and that we don't need anyone. I get it, I really do. The reality is we do need people. We need compassion for others as much as ourselves. We need patience, love, and time for ourselves.

The point of the feel good story is a reminder to take your opportunities as you get them. It's not every day that you are in a room filled with other people your age range that have gone through similar circumstances. Take the opportunity to figure out your issues, build a bridge, and walk over it like you own it. Take your



power back. Change the world with it.

At the end of the day you can take what I say with a grain of sand, but I care for each one of you. That sounds totally weird. Maybe it's because I served my time or maybe it's because I've grown into my emotions and realized I'm a big softy. Either way there's a whole world you haven't begun to imagine yet filled with people who literally are rooting for your success. If you are anything like me you are probably going like "Yeah right lady". I get it I used to think the same thing when Mr. Merrick would talk about all these people rooting for my success. It's true. I went to Washington D.C. to represent the State of Idaho on a national platform as a co-trainer within 2 years of getting out of IDJC custody. I was a co-trainer with other members of the Juvenile Justice Commission and I cannot tell you how many people came to me after sharing my experience in juvenile justice to congratulate me. I had complete strangers asking to hug me and say they were proud of me. These complete strangers wanted my input and asked about what affected me. They encouraged me and every day I find a reason to be inspired because I know if it wasn't for the grace of God I wouldn't have made it out. If it wasn't for the amazing people he put in my life from my correctional guard/staff mentor the notorious RF to the complete randos (random people) at conferences. Believe me when I say the sky's the limit.

For the people in the back saying that isn't an option for me. I was charged as an adult at 16 and was facing a life sentence.

"Stop making excuses and just do it."



Bullying Prevention by Moise Mzaliwa

"I have dealt with bullies ever since grade school",

I did not have any friends and it did not help that I was also new to the country. I also struggled with my English, so this ultimately made finding friends very difficult. As we started getting further into the school year, I started to notice more people taking an interest in me, I never really understood why, or what they were saying but I did not care. I was making friends, which was all I cared about.

During this time, I was in this program called, ELL, English Language Learner program. There were many other students who were new to America in that class, but I always saw myself as better than them. Every recess, I would choose to hang with the kids that spoke English "well" rather than the kids that were struggling just like myself. Those kids that spoke English well began teaching me different words during recess and I thought this was amazing. I loved it. Every word they taught me I would repeat verbatim throughout the day, I thought they were saints for taking in a lonely refugee boy, me. But I was wrong.

One specific day, recess was just ending, and those kids had just finished teaching me a new word. I left recess with great zeal. I ran into the school building

alongside the other kids and without any thought of the teachers or administrators, I began shouting, shouting the same word "my friends" had just taught me. One teacher heard exactly what I uttered and in complete disarray, she motioned me into her class and tried to explain the meaning of the word. I could not understand what she was saying, so I repeated the word back to her. At this moment she started to become annoyed, so she let me out of her classroom.

Later that same day, I was called into the principal's office. When I walked in, I noticed my parents were also in his office, I knew I had done something wrong, but I had no idea what. The principal suspended me for a couple of days and my parents disciplined me, the African way. It wasn't until I fully learned English that I understand why I got in trouble, but at the point it was too late to fight for my case. From that day forward, I did not like interacting with many people. That experience along with many others throughout my childhood gave me anxiety, imposter syndrome along with social and relationship issues. According to Kreps (2018), children involved in bullying experience "mental and behavioral issues" as well as problems with their cognitive and emotional development throughout childhood and even past it.

How do you stop it?

For many kids that are dealing with bullies or a situation with other kids that aren't in their favor, (continued on page 8 column 1)

(Bullying Prevention-continued from page 7 column 2)

their initial response might be to fight back or stoop to their level and humiliate them. I say, be better than that. Utilize your voice, speak up for yourself and if that does not work find a teacher or a trusted adult and explain the situation, that does not make you weak. If I had the ability to explain my side of the story that day at the principal's office or even stand up to other bullies that bullied me throughout elementary and middle school because of my accent and differences, I would have. But you have that ability.

There are many people today struggling with issues unknown to the world, issues that they carry with

them everywhere they go, even school. That is why, many schools and institutions are implementing new policies that help prevent bullying. But that is not enough. We need to spread positivity, kindness, and be more empathetic to other people's situations. Parents, adults, and institutions have a responsibility to play in preventing bullying and it all starts modeling these values on how to treat others.

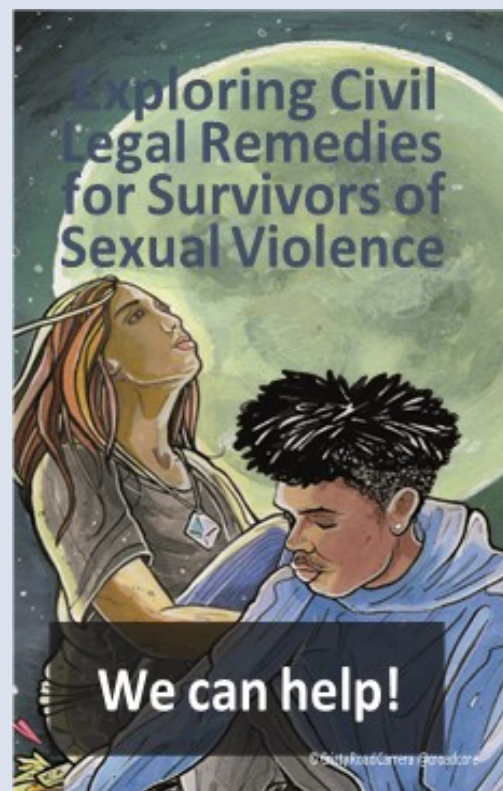
For more information regarding bullying and its effects on kids as well as how to prevent it, visit:

[Can Bullying Affect a Child's Development \(tessais.org\)](http://tessais.org)

Civil Legal Assistance For Youth

The Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence provides civil legal assistance for survivors of sexual violence aged 11-24. Civil legal assistance needed by survivors can take many forms, and may include help:

- **Navigating educational or administrative processes.** This type of assistance is often necessary if the assault took place on school or employer property, or the assailant was someone the survivor goes to school or works with. We can also help if the assault took place under another context, and the survivor needs to seek accommodations at school or work to allow them to continue to learn or earn income.
- **With housing concerns.** From negotiating with a landlord to allow early termination of a lease agreement, to putting extra security measures in place, we can help provide a survivor options and work with them to get safe and secure housing.
- **Moving through the criminal justice system.** The criminal justice system is confusing, and survivors often don't understand why law enforcement and prosecutors make the decisions they do. We can engage in discussions with system actors to get more information and make sure the survivor's voice is heard.
- **With related immigration concerns.** If a survivor you are working with has immigration concerns related to reporting the assault or seeking services, we can help connect the survivor with a qualified immigration attorney (at no cost to the survivor) to discuss options.



We can also assist with protecting records and survivor privacy, seeking crime victim assistance and other funds available to recoup financial losses, as well as make referrals to attorneys that may be able to help in other areas (such as monetary recovery through civil law suits). Consultations can be done by phone or if necessary for representation we can come to your site to meet with the client. To make a referral to the Idaho Coalition civil legal assistance program, please contact Annie at annie@engagingvoices.org.

Mental Health & Resources

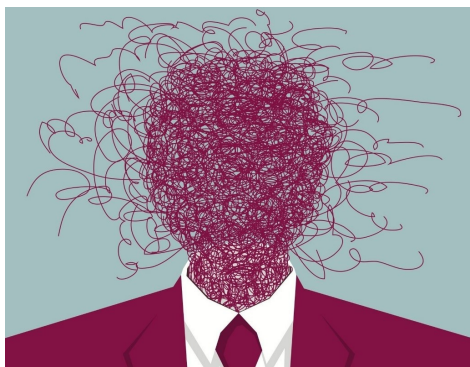
by Kayla Hoff

I was born in New Orleans, Louisiana. At about 2 weeks old I was adopted by two loving parents. My life was beautiful. I felt wanted, cared for, protected, and loved. At about 3 years old, my parents got divorced. It wasn't a pretty or smooth divorce. It was bumpy and filled with potholes. I wasn't too aware of this at 3 years old, but my older siblings were. I had 4 siblings at the time. I was the youngest. My dad had moved to Boise, Idaho and remarried while my mom stayed at the house we had in Nampa, Idaho and also remarried. At just 3 years old, I started the process of going back and forth between homes every other weekend while also being picked up on Tuesday nights to go out to dinner with my dad and other siblings. At 4 years old, the downward spiral of my life begun. My dad began to tell us stories about my mom that weren't nice or filtered for us young children. We began to ask my mom questions about what our dad had told us. Then our mom would tell us something entirely different; then our dad would tell us something different, and we'd ask our mom if it's true. We would then go back and forth and back and forth. It was confusing and concerning. This back-and-forth blame game continued until I was about 11 years old. My oldest brother had already grown up and left. Now there were three of us left. From age 12 to about 20 years old,

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my head was filled with negative and suicidal thoughts, bad and painful memories, and a very pessimistic attitude. I couldn't see any light at the end of the tunnel. It was like a never-ending abyss. A black hole that I didn't think I could ever escape.

When I was about 13 years old, I was diagnosed with depression and



anxiety. I was taken to a counselor and given a prescription for the first time in my life. The thought of going to a counselor scared me. In the beginning, I cried a few times because I felt helpless, and I knew I couldn't do it on my own.

My self-esteem went downhill, and I hated the thought of needing a counselor or needing medication which scared me a lot. My mom and the doctors took about a year to convince me that it would really help to take medication. They put on a very small dose and continued to remind me that it was just to help ease my depressive episodes. My negative thoughts about medications and my own self-esteem started to get loud-

(Continued in column 3)

er and louder as I grew older. At about 15 years old, I started to have more and more suicidal thoughts. I felt worthless, unwanted, unloved, unnecessary, and useless. I hated myself for anything and everything that I did wrong, and I beat myself up for making even the slightest mistakes in my everyday life, which drove me to being a perfectionist with everything I did. But the perfectionism only made my inner thoughts worse.

"My mom calls people's inner, negative thoughts 'gremlins'."

She says that they (gremlins) grow worse if you feed them. And I fed them a lot. Every time I would get a negative thought, I would agree with it and believe it without questioning it. And, whenever I had the opportunity to prove that the thought was true I would take it. If my thoughts said that I was stupid, and I did something as simple as tripping over my own feet while walking – it was validation that I was indeed stupid. These negative thoughts made my depression and anxiety about life worse and worse and worse. And at 16 years old, the thoughts became too much for me.

I attempted to commit suicide at 16 years old in May of 2016. That day will forever stay engraved in my brain because, unfortunately, that was Mother's Day. At the time, I wasn't

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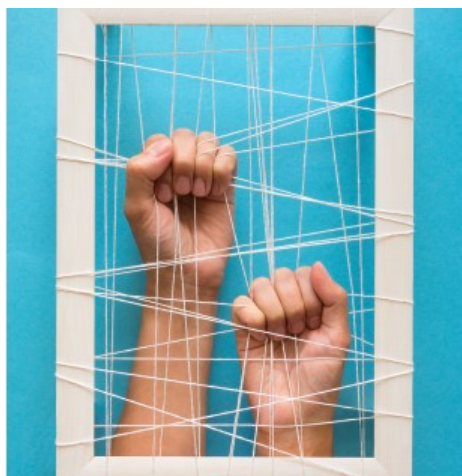
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aware that it was Mother's Day – nor did I care. At around 1 or 2am, I went into my bathroom, locked the door, and took [a large handful of pills](#). Before I did that, I made the odd decision of sending goodbye messages to my family members. I wrote one to each person. The first message I sent was to my oldest brother, Taylor (who saved my life). He thought it was weird that he was getting a text so late in the night and that the text was phrased very suspiciously. He decided to call my mom and ask her if everything was okay with me. My mom was running around the house yelling my name and trying to find me. I wanted to say where I was, but I couldn't speak or move. I felt numb and paralyzed.

"She found me in the bathroom and rushed me to the emergency room."

It was almost too late. The doctors were all telling me to breathe and try and be calm because my entire body started to get numb. I was also hyperventilating and panicking because I realized that I really didn't want to die yet, and I knew I might. Then I heard my mom's voice above all of the chaos in my brain telling me to breathe as she squeezed my almost numb hand. I heard more voices telling me to breathe and so with everything I had in me, I tried breathing as deeply as I could. It wasn't easy to breathe at that moment, but I tried very hard to. After about 15 seconds, I was

breathing deeper and calming down faster and eventually calm enough for them to give me a sedative. I was put into a psychiatric hospital for about 2 weeks and then released. The



next two years I had many people helping me get through the hard moments and the PTSD that I experienced after the attempt.

Finally, ages 18-20 were rough, but eye-opening. But they lead me to where I am now. I went through multiple boyfriends and toxic friendships. I even moved out of my house for almost 6 months and moved in with a toxic boyfriend that was mentally abusive. All of this proved my lack of worth, love, care, etc.

At age 20, I made the ultimate decision to do something different because what I was doing obviously wasn't working for me. With the help from my family, a new counselor, doctors, and friends I was able to completely transform my life into what I truly deserved and what I wanted. I started saving money, working day and night on positive thoughts and being more optimistic about my life. It took a lot of work to change my own outlook on my past, present, and future, and also be grateful for all that has happened in my life.

It took me a long time to truly believe that all things happen with a purpose, and my own life motto that everything happens for a reason.

With all of the negativity in my life, I have learned some pretty valuable lessons and found some very helpful resources that I will forever take with me. I think that one of most important thing that helped me was knowing my own self-worth and loving myself for who I am. Learning to love and value myself really helped me surround myself with people who actually valued me, and it also helped me see those who didn't. It wasn't easy by any means and it took some practice (and I am still working on it), but it really helped me grow into a better person. Seeking a counselor also really helped me. I went through a few counselors before finding the right one for me. But one thing that I learned was that having a counselor isn't something to be ashamed of or to hate yourself for or anything

"Learning to love and value myself really helped me surround myself with people who actually valued me, and it also helped me see those who didn't."

like that. For me, my counselor is someone I can trust and someone outside of my family and friends that I can be super honest and myself around. I feel like it is so important to have at least one person that you can trust and be comfortable talking to about anything.

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And finally, battling my own internal thinking and “gremlins” has been the most helpful tactic I’ve ever had. I have struggled for so long to fight back against the negative and demeaning thoughts that freely roamed around in my head. I would challenge anyone and everyone to fight back and tell those gremlins to go away and to combat those negative and demeaning thoughts with positive and uplifting ones. You have the power to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Trust yourself, keep going, and keep fighting and you will find it.



Local Juvenile Justice Councils Need You!

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.

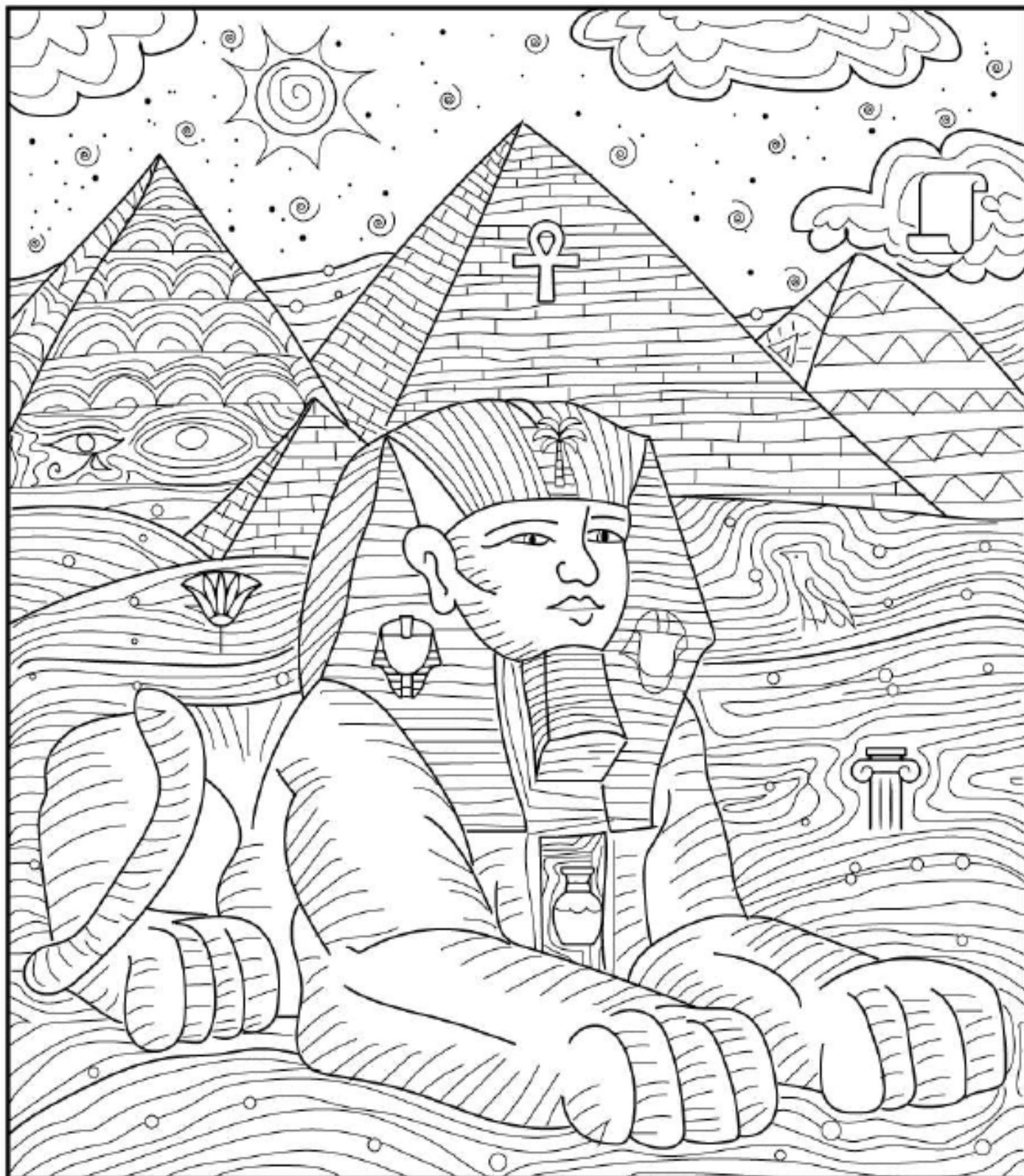
Visit www.ijjc.idaho.gov to learn more about your local District Council!

Contact the Idaho Juvenile Justice Commission Youth Committee:
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