

# Soul Support

Miranda Kassebuam

**TRIGGER WARNING TRIGGER WARNING TRIGGER WARNING**

Loss is not a foreign subject to me and has constantly deteriorated my mental health from a young age. Mental health is defined as

a person’s condition about their psychological and emotional well-being while mental illness is described as health conditions involving changes in emotion, thinking or behavior. Honestly, I have a beef with these definitions. As someone who could never afford psychiatric help and never diagnosed as mentally ill but exemplifies mental illness, I face challenges and struggle with coping mechanisms. Constantly I am questioning why change in emotions or behavior deems us as mentally “ill”. My

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emotions change every day in every single way, and the slightest inconveniences ruins them, so does that make me mentally ill? And how long does that label last? Will people view me differently? There is so much stigma and bad perceptions around mental health and resources, and I totally understand them all. Many of the barriers for call centers such



as the National Suicide Lifeline and others is that when given referrals, perception, in addition to financial barriers, prevent many individuals from receiving help. As someone who grew up watching and receiving violence, lost a boyfriend to suicide, and a victim of domestic violence, I have attempted suicide multiple times in my short but not so sweet 20 years of life. At the time I was aware of the National Suicide Hotline, but never once when I had overpowering suicidal thoughts did I think to call Lifeline. I have educated myself on mental health resources

and want to share them with you in hopes for better mental health or an outlet when it is needed.

One resource used statewide across Idaho is dialing **211**, or **1-800-926-2588**. “211” is an Idaho careline where you can seek out referrals, specialist services, and information. This program is managed by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (DHW) and is available Monday through Friday, 8am-6pm. Additionally, a popular community health center named Terry Reilly aims to make affordable and accessible medical, dental, and behavioral health care



for the needs of the community. This program includes education, treatment, case management programs, and qualified medical staff that provide personalized psychiatric help and medication. Terry Reilly has operating clinics throughout Idaho that

work together to create the best health care system for the community and its patients.

The most known to teens and most used is the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, **1-800-273-8255**, or a three-digit code **988**. The code



is new, and allows for faster and easier call routing. Lifeline provides free, confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for callers, and providing the best practices by professionals in the United States. The crisis centers mission statement is to “provide mental and emotional support for state and local communities” and has many Lifelines Network partners such as #BeThe10, Follow Up Matters, You Matter, Zero Suicide, Strength After, and more. Lifeline also provides crisis and suicidal call lines, therefore serving emergent and crisis cases daily. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in order to fulfill its

community’s needs. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is another free and confidential national hotline that provides 24/7 treatment referrals and information services for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorder. Their number is **1-800-622-4357** and is used for referrals, local treatment services, support groups, and community-based groups. The last and most fascinating growing resource, in my opinion, is The Trevor Project. The Project provides information and support to the LGBTQI+ 24/7 in a mission to end suicide in young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning individuals. They have programs such as crisis services, peer support, research, public education, and advocacy with guiding principles of diversity

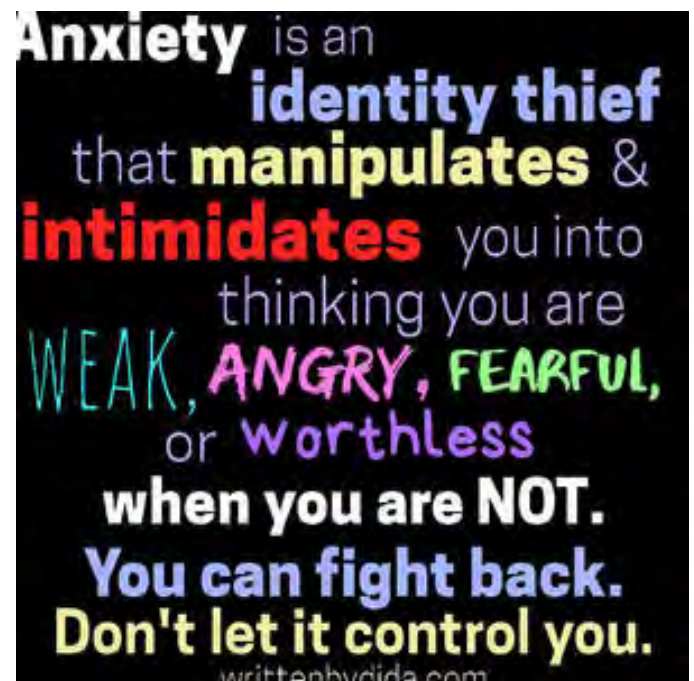


and inclusion, youth-centricity, growth, and quality innovation. Personally, I am not a part of the LGBTQI+ community, but I am an ally and find this resource the most moving because of the constant changes and opinions of people in society. A close family member of mine cannot come out about her sexuality because of our family and their beliefs. She has attempted suicide from being bullied or “hate-crime”, which breaks my heart because I know it happens everywhere all the time. LGBTQI+ young people are four times more likely to attempt suicide, so it is key to have a resource for those who may be struggling with issues such as coming out, LGBTQI+ identity, depression, and suicide.

It is also important to raise awareness of suicide and mental health as suicide is the second leading cause of death in young people across the United States. I hope that these resources find the right people and are utilized to their fullest extent.

*“Anything that’s human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting, and less scary”. Mr. Rogers*

As intimidating and scary as mental health can be, you truly deserve to be happy after the life challenges you have faced, and I wish nothing but peace of mind and happiness on your journey through mental health.



# The Edge of Seventeen

Krista Frank

Every teenager dreams about their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. To gain the sense of independence and becoming their own person. For some turning the age of 18 is exciting and promising. It's a step into adulthood and having the responsibility of making decisions for yourself without the authority of a parental guardian. For others it may be daunting and intimidating. Unsure of what's to come as you take a leap into unknown territory. My friends were stoked to finally turn into an adult. All they talked about was



the freedom from curfews, not being told what to do, and no more listening to adults. But for me, I wished I shared the same excitement as my friends. Instead of excitedly counting down the days, I was dreading it! I was the person who was nervous of this unknown age. I believed that everything would change once I became a legal adult. Thoughts and concerns swarmed my mind of what could happen once I took the leap from 17 to the big 18. I was nervous about no longer being a minor, considering I've been one my whole life. I knew that I would have to be responsible for all my



decisions, make medical decisions, find a job, and really think about what I want for the future. But at the same time, I attempted to look at the positive side of things. I was on the verge of graduating high school and thought perhaps becoming a legal adult had major advantages. I can choose to move out and go to college without consulting anyone! I'll have the freedom to get a tattoo, serve jury duty, get married (if I wanted to), buy lottery tickets, and so much more.

The days went by and a month before my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, the unspeakable happened...

Covid-19 hit, canceling my school for the rest of the semester. I became a legal adult during the crisis of the pandemic. I had never before been more confused in my whole life. I just began to become excited about "starting my life", yet everything paused. I was legally responsible for myself and I had no idea what the next day had in store. It was an emotional rollercoaster! I struggled to find a job due to everything being shut down. I sent out over 20 applications and resumes and never received a call back. My

whole plan after turning 18 and graduating high school was to go to a university and begin studying to become a teacher. Yet, I wasn't able to attend due to the high cost and everything going on. I felt completely defeated! It seemed the plan that I had for years, was literally destroyed within a span of a few months. Honestly, I felt that I had failed at my first step into adulthood.

I soon found myself falling into a depression and contemplating what I should do next. I had an honest conversation with myself, and



asked, “What did it really mean to be 18?” It wasn’t the fact that I no longer had a curfew or the freedom to do what I want. For me it meant taking responsibility for myself and holding myself accountable as I made this transition from adolescence into adulthood. I knew that even though I was having a difficult time with my transition it was important to believe in myself and continue moving forward. I decided it was time to take responsibility for my decisions and enroll at the community college in Nampa. Which turned out to be one of the best decisions. I’m not going to lie, it took a lot of hard work, but it was definitely worth it. A few months later I finally landed a job at a Mexican Grill, which I’m still currently at. I love working there and knew that it was meant to be finding that job when I did.

Back to the present time, I am now 19 years old and graduating this semester with my associates degree. I have a great job which I really enjoy, and still plan on achieving my goal of going to a university to become a teacher in the fall. The huge take away that I have learned from becoming 18 is that you can’t control what happens, but you can control how you react to your situation. Even though nothing went according to plan, I didn’t give up on myself and I continued to do my best with what I had. Transitioning from 17 to 18 may have a few bumps in the road as you try to navigate the unknown territory of adulthood, but just know as long as you...

*believe in yourself,  
work hard, and  
anything is possible.*



# ART & RESILIENCE

Chandra Whelchel



## EXPRESSION0

I grew up without many friends. I was friendly, and most people were friendly back. I never felt like I connected to anyone throughout middle and high school. I had maybe 2 or 3 people that I regularly talked to, but didn't socialize much outside of school. I wasn't in sports, either, but I did enjoy the actual academics of school, even if I hated the drama.

Because of my asocial nature, I kept to myself in my room for most of high school. I really enjoyed art, and it was one of my favorite subjects in school. I felt as though my emotions were better expressed on paper than with words. Any mood I was in could be translated

effortlessly into a medium, even if no one else understood it.



Looking back on my artwork, I can reflect on my emotions at which helped the time, me to cope with the outside stresses of school. I had high anxiety from a young age, and always felt the need to have my hard work and grades validated. This need came from the fact that I grew up without either of my parents being around much. They both worked full time and my dad went to school full time as well. Most of my memories from childhood were from babysitters and neighborhood



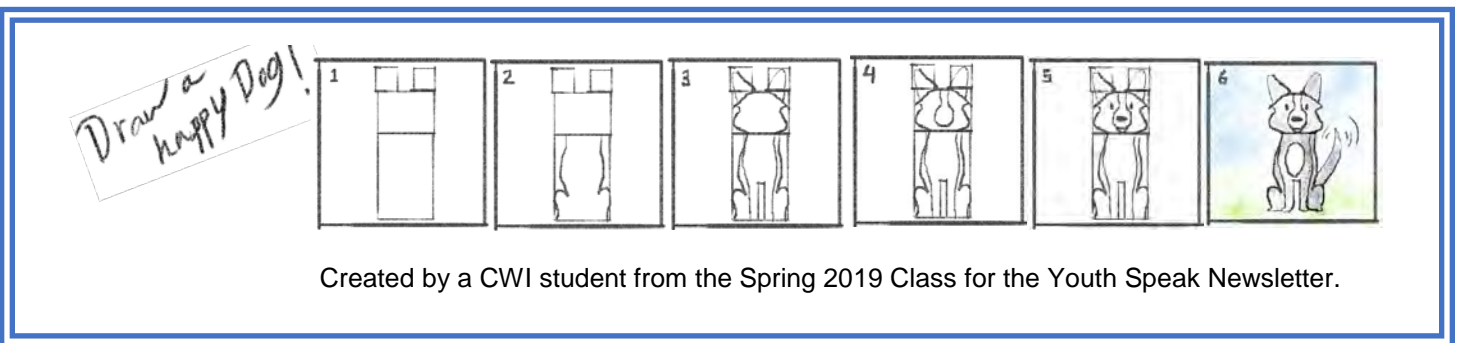
bullies. This caused my anxiety to get worse, and I felt myself hating the world. I shut myself away from people even more when I entered high school. Despite lonely feeling for most of my childhood, I always felt comfort creating art. I attribute this hobby to my happiness now, as it created a positive outlet for me to express my emotions.

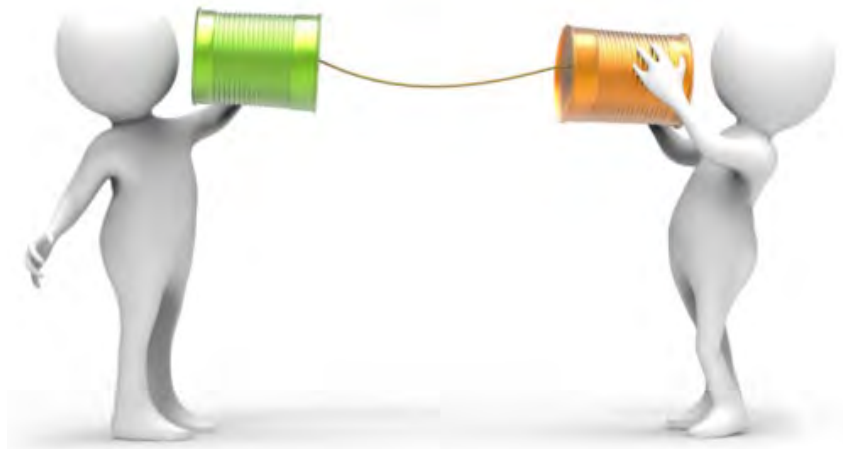
## RESILIENCE

Even today, I have struggles in life that I am grateful for my passion for art to help me cope. Two years ago, I was in a car accident; four days later my daughter lost her thumb from my son slamming it into a door jamb; four months after that, I got a divorce and was kicked out of my home; two months later, I was laid off from my job which provided healthcare for my kids. Then, four months after I lost my job, my dog past away, my best friend of five years.

I feel strongly that my ability to cope was due to my desire to express my emotions through art, even if no one could understand it. I tried “talk therapy” and medication, which only did so much for me. Later, I stopped both because of the cost and the side effects of the medication.

As a stress reducer, I continue to paint and draw between assignments in school. I would not be where I am today if not for the outlet of artistic expression.





# COMMUNICATION IS KEY:

## Better Communication Skills for Stressful Moments in Relationships

-Samantha Webber

*Relationships can be both  
challenging and rewarding.*

A relationship is defined as the way in which two or more people or groups regard and behave towards each other. We are constantly communicating with people using words, facial expressions, posture, and body language and it's important to keep that in mind when we are having a conversation with people, especially our loved ones. Trying to communicate with your partner during an argument can sometimes feel impossible but is not. This article will tell you the dos and don'ts of

creating and maintaining a good communication style.

*Affirming* communication is an effective style that makes you and



your partner feel seen, heard, and valued, which makes for a healthier environment to have a conversation. It's a vital resource for coping with stress and maintaining strengths. Talk *calmly* until a solution is resolved. *Respect* each other's

feelings. Take *time* to not hurt them and *listen* to what they're saying. Most of the time the argument is happening because of how deeply one cares about the relationship with you. Keeping in mind that not everywhere is suitable or appropriate to have that kind of conversation. Re-evaluating the situation one to two weeks later is a good way of checking back in on the problem. Like what worked and what didn't. It's important to remember that you're a team and working and coming together to resolve an issue.



The opposite style to affirming is called *discouraging* communication. This is when you *don't* talk things through or don't reach a solution together. *Yelling and screaming* may be more present here, which may make you feel more "heard" but it is only making matters worse. If you find yourself in this type of

position it is important to stop it and continue it later when you are both calm. During a stressful time, you may want to bring up *past problems* but that only defers the situation. Those problems should be set aside and saved for another time.

Lastly, leaving the room or house (unless you feel threatened or scared) in the heat of the moment without resolving or "pausing" the situation can really hurt you or your partner. Practicing and using these tips can be very beneficial to you and anyone you share a relationship with. Coming to a conclusion or agreement on something with another person can be challenging but rewarding.

## **Teamwork makes the**



**dream work!**

# Struggling With Addiction

Mariah Devaul

Addiction shows its ugly face in all forms. Anything or any habit can become an addiction. The most common addictions are nicotine, alcohol, and drugs. I have struggled with my own addictions to all of the above, and can say that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Addiction is not a hopeless disease. People who struggle with addiction can be and have been in recovering for years. One very useful tool for those addicted to alcohol is

to speak. It has helped hundreds of thousands of alcoholics overcome their addiction.



Alcoholics Anonymous, or AA. It is an anonymous program made by alcoholics for alcoholics to help each other and themselves get through their alcoholism. The book of AA is like their personal Bible or guide to life, so

Narcotics Anonymous is for those who struggle with addiction to drugs, and like AA they have their own guide to life; the Narcotics Anonymous Book. This program has also helped hundreds of thousands of addicts overcome their addiction.

Struggling with an addiction isn't hopeless. There is hope and I am living proof. For eight years I struggled with drug addiction to various drugs. I lost my family, all of my friends, I was lonely, and felt so helpless. I thought

there was nowhere else for me, nothing else for me to be. I was so wrong, and if you are thinking those same things, you are wrong, too. There is a life outside of addiction and there is hope for the long-time struggling addicts. Nobody has to be alone in that deep dark place, there are people to reach out to and places to go to get the help when help is needed.

The journey from addiction to recovery is not always pretty. There are bumps in each and every road you take, obstacles to overcome, and habits to let go. It is not easy. It takes a lot of work, but it is doable and it is worth it.

I have been on the other side of things, in and out of juvenile detention centers, and then in and out of jails, rehabs, programs, etc. I was that kid thinking there was no other life for me besides the fast life of drugs and money. At the time I thought it was the life for me: the fun life. Now, I sit here with two children, an adoring husband, a wonderful job that I love, and I am in college to learn how to help people, to help kids like you and people like us to overcome their addictions and move past their obstacles in life.



My biggest words of encouragement and advice to you is,

***...reach out to those who love you.***

Don't burn those bridges, hug your moms, your dads, grandparents, or anybody who loves you and supports you and cares for you. Hug them tight, they are your lifeline to get out of that world. Then once you've done so, reach out to those who can give you the help you need, such as counseling services, rehabs, or whatever you feel you need. Take that leap, you won't be sorry. Your life will become infinitely better than your wildest dreams. You will know happiness like you've never known before and you will finally be free of those chains.



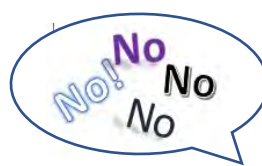
# Changing My Perspective-Sam Moore

*I was 16 years old when I was charged as an adult in Canyon County, Idaho. My crime was one of the few offenses that a youth can commit that could potentially cause them to be charged as an adult and mine faced the 25 to life sentence range. It was my first and only charge. Had the judge who handed me my sentence chose not to wait 7 months, I would have been starting my 5 year minimum-15 year maximum plea deal at the Women's state prison in Pocatello. That was my first opportunity with the Justice System, something 99% of youth in my shoes, at the time, didn't get. It's because of that fateful day that I am where I am now.*

*That small act of mercy changed my perspective. It didn't happen right away and it honestly took a lot of years for me to be able to say how extraordinarily fortunate I have been with these opportunities that I have been given. Because that's the only thing that kept me from failing. I don't know if it was God, if it was the Universe saying sorry for all stuff I was forced to endure as a child, but since then every time I have been close to falling through the gaps there has always been someone to help me up.*

*Having the felony, I do and it being on my permanent record has really had negative impacts on my life. I was completely forced out of Idaho's rental market which put me in a bad spot with my probation. There were times where I was sleeping in my car in below freezing and over 100 degree temperatures, while being the student body president of CWI, working 2 jobs, and working with the Idaho Juvenile Justice Commission and trying to comply with probation.*

*Being immunocompromised and having chronic health issues only makes being homeless worse, and during COVID it's almost impossible to get access to isolation units. I cannot tell you how many times I have been denied something because of my actions almost 10 years ago.*



*Everywhere I went I was told no. No Jobs, no housing, no internships, and even some colleges. I can't tell you how many times I would call my staff mentor Mr. Fogg and ask him "What's the point because I'm doing everything right and it's not working. What should I do? Where do I go? WHY?"*

*I used to think I was going nowhere, that my life would suck, and that I was always going to be alone and miserable.*

*And then I was given an opportunity to join the Juvenile Justice Commission. Everywhere I went I was told no, except the Commission. For once in my life I found people who wanted me not in spite of my criminal record but BECAUSE OF MY CRIMINAL RECORD. My work with the Juvenile Justice Commission for the last 6 years has been my greatest accomplishment and greatest struggle because I had to deal with housing insecurities while balancing all of these other responsibilities. There were times that I was crying out to God asking him why he is making my life so hard right now. What's the point of my suffering? What's the point in trying when I am alone, when I am always going to be alone, when no one cares and I am just another number lost in a sea of numbers.*

*In my times of greatest suffering I force myself to remember that...*

### **I am the captain of my destiny**

*...and that no one will take that power away from me. I found meaning in my suffering by serving my community so no one has to go through what I*

*went through. I pushed and I trotted along and there were times where I was literally on death's door...*

***But I Wanted To Succeed More Than I  
Wanted To Breathe And That's Why I  
Made It.***

*Six years later after being released from corrections I now work with the Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) as the Youth Partnership and Training Associate. The CJJ is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing children and youth from becoming involved in the courts and upholding the highest standards of care when youth are charged with wrongdoing and enter the justice system. I am literally WORKING AT MY DREAM JOB where I work with YOUTH JUST LIKE YOU who are changing the way their Juvenile Justice Systems work FROM INSIDE THEIR CELLS. I cannot tell you what it is like having my dream job and all of it being BECAUSE*



*of my experience with corrections and not IN SPITE OF my experience with corrections. I do this for all my friends who became victims of the streets and the prison pipeline, and finally I do this because you are all worth it. Every single one. I hope that whatever struggle you go through, know that it ends. Life doesn't always have to be what it has been, but that's a choice you have to make for yourself.*

*There are so many possibilities out there for each of you. If I can make it, you can too. I know for a lot of you when you get out, you are right back in*

*the same situations. I get it. My environment was the ...*

**...#1**

*contributing factor to my commitment. I had to make my own family and find my own support system but there are people out there willing to give you a second chance and hear your story. There are people that genuinely want to help and if you want to make a difference...*

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**Join us at the Youth Committee. We need you to make juvenile justice better.**

**Thank you to our partners for collaborating on the Youth Committee Newsletter Project.**



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The Idaho Juvenile Justice Commission is a board of governor-appointed volunteers from each district working to represent the interest of Idaho concerning its youth. We, the Youth Committee 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 staff member Chelsea Newton at [Chelsea.newton@idjc.idaho.gov](mailto:Chelsea.newton@idjc.idaho.gov).