

## Corey's Resiliency Story

- **Introduction:** My name is Corey and I'm 16. I'm going into the 10th grade this fall and I'm actually looking forward to it. I'd like to find a job in the restaurant or landscaping business. I don't mind certain kinds of hard work. I like music and working out, cooking and building things, and video games. I tend to be kind of quiet and keep to myself.
- **My Journey:** I think it all started when my dad died. It affected the way I think. I got really negative and depressed and I didn't want to live. I still feel like there's a big gap in my life –like something is missing. In 4th grade I started getting more detentions, and in 5th grade I got suspended a couple of times. Some of the medications I'm on had some bad effects on me. I gained a lot of weight on one of them, and some make me really tired, others make me feel really speedy. I first got expelled in 8th grade, and then I got an IEP in 9th grade. The IEP started helping at first, but then the teachers stopped enforcing it, and things got bad again. I left school before getting kicked out, and now I go to a therapeutic day school. The classes are a lot smaller and the teachers seem to understand better how I behave and react to events in the school. I used to get really, really mad at times and I'd forget and not even remember what I did, like punching holes in the wall, but that stopped once I started on Lithium and Adderall. Sometimes when I get really mad, it makes me think about my dad, and I start to think about hurting myself. Usually, if I get manic, it ends up with the police being involved, and I get lousy charges filed against me. It seems to me that the police have it better, that they can control their emotions without even trying, but I get so angry and overwhelmed that I can't control myself.

I tend to look for people in similar situations as my own when I look for friends – people who don't have it so good, who struggle, like me. Usually when I make friends, my mom doesn't like them and doesn't want me to hang around them. Other times, it seems like they use me, once they've gotten to know me, and so our friendship doesn't last real long.

- **Educate:** Living with a mood disorder is really hard. I feel like people gang up on me sometimes, like if we're both wrong, everyone takes the other person's side, not mine. Getting up in the morning is hard, too. I sleep longer now and stay up later at night than before. The side effects are nasty and I dread them. I usually wake up real cranky. I have some memory loss and I have certain things that I have to do each day to keep myself comfortable – like my socks have to be on a certain way because of my OCD. I get really paranoid that other people are talking about me, and I'm paranoid about the police. At school, I find it hard to get motivated to do things, especially as the day goes on. Sometimes, though, I think having a mood disorder helps me stay on top of things. I plan ahead more. On the other hand, it makes me more judgmental sometimes and it's hard to keep my mood regulated. I tend not to look real happy, so people are afraid of me. Since my dad died, I don't feel happy like I used to. I can't really put my finger on what would make me real happy.

What would be helpful is if other people could understand that I'm not trying to be mean or difficult, it's just the way I feel. It would help if they could understand how bad I feel sometimes, and that I can't help it.

- **Resilience:** Despite not being happy, I feel I have a good future ahead of me. That keeps me going. I look forward to a career in culinary arts or automotive fabrication, something challenging that allows me to use my creative side. A turning point for me came last year when I changed to the therapeutic day school. The teachers are more understanding and my grades went up – I felt good about that. Teachers at the old school tried to tell me I was a threat to them, and I felt like I was being set up to get kicked out of the school, but I don't feel like that at the new school. I feel like I'm able to be more independent and successful at this school. In order to stay strong and resilient, I need to stay focused on my plan for my future. I really want to get a job in the culinary field or automotive arena. There's a lot of stuff I really want to do in life, and not enough time to do it!
- **Barriers to my resiliency:** Certain people, like bullies and those who like to put you down are barriers to my resiliency. My mood disorder is a huge barrier in itself; I take a lot of walks or cook when I get upset, or I remove myself from the situation, go someplace by myself that's quiet. If more people minded their own business and left me alone, life would be better, easier for me. If I didn't have a mood disorder, I wouldn't have broken my knuckles, I wouldn't have gotten expelled from school, wouldn't have a juvenile record, and I wouldn't get so mad and I'd have more friends.
- **My advice to others:** Go get counseling, stick with the medications, even if it doesn't work at first, it will work eventually; think before you act, watch out for other people, try to keep calm and avoid conflict. Most importantly, you have to think before you do something. You can really mess yourself up and end up farther away from your family and friends. The other thing is to keep looking ahead at the future. Have hope and keep looking forward to something!
- **What others could do to help:** People could help by listening to what the youth have to say – really listen to them. If they say they don't want any help, don't try to force it on them at that moment and don't judge them or challenge them about it. Don't give up on them, either. Don't tell them what to do – give them a choice, ask them to work with you. If someone is really, really mad or out of control, leave them alone, but go tell someone else who has more experience dealing with them. Give them time to calm down, and don't tell them what they did wrong. Give them support and an opportunity to figure things out for themselves, but don't give up on them. Research would be helpful for my family. And, they need to get help for themselves from other people who have similar disorders, like from a mood disorder support group.

I can't name just one person who's made a difference – there have been a lot of them.