

Archiving Resiliency Through Youth Testimony

Tyler's Resiliency Story

- **Introduction:** My name is Tyler and **I'm 7 years old**, going into the 2nd grade. When I'm out of school, I'm sad because I really want to get smarter, and I like math projects. I love to read books, sometimes I don't want to take my eyes off of them! My favorite sport is Tae Kwon Do – I'm a green tip -- one belt away from purple.
- **Experience:** We all lived together in our own house until some bad choices were made and we had to move in with my Grandma. Less than 6 weeks later after Mom had to sell all our stuff for money to live on, Mom and I flew to California to stay with a friend, and her family. I never got to say goodbye to Daddy because he was in jail -- he died December 6, 2007 from accidentally drinking too much. I only hear from Maw-Maw and Paw-Paw now.

We lived in California for 18 months. Mom has mentioned that trying to teach me right from wrong was difficult. I would accidentally hit and kick and spit on people. I guess I couldn't do what people asked of me even though I wanted to be a good boy. When I was almost 4, Mom and I moved to Ohio. After we got off the plane, my cousins picked us up to go to my grandmother's house to live. We lived with her for nine months until my Mom got put on disability. Mom took me to counseling almost as soon as we moved to Ohio. My counselor was and is a great friend and a great help to me and my Mom. We tried a drug called Concerta on me but it made me feel worse. Then we tried Strattera and Risperdal and they worked. I felt better inside my head. I could listen and act more like I always wanted. I am still taking those medications, plus Benadryl to help me sleep. I have been told I have ADHD and major depression. It's hard sometimes, but Mom and I are a team and we talk a lot and try to help each other.

In 2007, I got kicked out of karate class as an orange belt – that was when I knew something was wrong. I am still sad, but I found a new place and study Tae Kwon Do. I am very good at my art. I love to practice it.

- **Educate:** My mood disorder makes me feel angry and very sad. I try so hard to be a happy and kind boy even when my insides feel bad. I do stuff I really do not want to do – like swearing and yelling and not doing what I know I am supposed to. I want people to know that it's not them; it's my illness in my head that makes me act that way. My Mom struggles with her problems and expects me to do stuff I did not remember needed done. She usually apologizes and we talk it over and cuddle. I apologize when I know I hurt someone because that is how I want people to treat me.
- **Resilience:** My cat helps me stay strong, and so does my punching bag. The discipline I learn in martial arts absolutely helps me to be resilient. My school counselor helps me remember that my dad passed away from alcoholism, but he's in a better place now. My counselor continues to guide me and cheer me on. My relationship with my mom really helps

me understand when I start to struggle with my illness. Mom tries to explain to me when my behavior is off or out of the ordinary. Mom always takes time to explain all things, like my illness, why drinking, smoking and doing drugs is bad and lots more. Our support group is also a great support for me.

- **Barriers to resilience:** Some kids at swimming or school are not very nice -- they are defiant and threaten me or tell me to go away. Moving away from these people helps me stay strong and resilient, but it still hurts because I do not always understand why they act that way toward me. Sometimes teachers or Mom will point out that maybe I said or did something, like splashing someone at the pool and that might be why they treated me that way. I am also reminded by adults that it is sad, but some people are mean and to just ignore them.

Because my Mom talks everything over with me, I often learn things despite the challenges we both have. Sometimes I don't know how to say I am feeling bad, or don't even realize it until after I act out. I am 7 and still learning. I want to grow up a strong, respected man so I do not give up.

- **My advice:** I would tell other kids that it's the illness in their head that's causing the problem. I would tell them not to let it get in their way -- to stay on the road that goes to life!
- **What people can do to help:** If people could be more understanding of what a mental illness is, that would be awesome. We need to remember that we have an illness, but that illness does not make us bad people. Don't let anyone tell you that you are bad or worthless or stupid! Find friends, young or adults, and be a friend to people that treat you nice and make you smile.