

Out of my Shell

I created this drawing to represent coming out of my shell; to be able express my wants and needs in order to become more independent.

The leaf in my drawing tells about a time when I was living somewhere else, not able to express myself or be more out in the real world. Growing up with my grandmother she kept me very sheltered. I was not allowed to go places or do things by myself. Earlier this year my grandmother became ill and went into the hospital. Even though I was sheltered, my grandmother was the only family that took care of me and cared about me. She stayed at the hospital for a whole month before my out-of-state aunt called and told me she had passed. I was not able to go and see her because I did not have transportation, so I went to school each day and did the best I could to take care of myself. I tried living with a friend and her grandmother, but she often threatened to make us leave. I bottled everything in and kept to myself so I would not upset her. It was not very comforting and I did not speak much.

My school social worker invited the Director of the Transitional Living Program in the next county to visit me at my school and I applied to the program. When things went wrong with where I was staying, I was brought to the TLP house. Being there was really different and I got to do things I was not used to, like go on walks and making decisions for myself.

I began to grow and change. I started making decisions for myself like going to the doctor to help me with a problem that I had had for months. I also got new glasses. When I was with my grandmother, I only had a job as part of a program at school. I began learning how to fill out job applications. I also became a volunteer at the Thrift Shop working the cash register. I was not allowed to cook before and I enjoyed being able to try making different meals for me and the other girls. I became the payee of my own benefits and for the first time was allowed to spend money on myself. At first, I bought a few nice things that I really wanted, but now I am trying to learn to save and use a budget. It was not long before I had my first real job and a paycheck. These things made a huge impact on me. Now, I smile! Before, I talked very quiet and others could barely hear me but I am much louder now and I am not afraid to talk to people in general. I also talk more about my feelings to those I trust. I want to learn to drive and I am signing up for a driving permit and classes soon! I even finished a three week course in hospitality and earned a training certificate.

The butterfly is how I see myself after overcoming my past, my fear, my grief, and my anger. As a butterfly, I will be able to do anything and everything I choose.

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