

In a Client's Words

Graduation Speech

by Anna Gordon, 8th Grade Student, April 24, 2018

I'm gonna be happy, I'm gonna be free, and successful. Those are the words I would tell myself. Well, the world had other plans. I can remember being five or six; I was in first or second grade. We had a spelling test that day. I wanted to be the one reading out all the words to the class. I thought I was going to get all the words right and get a gold star. I raised my hand, my teacher called on me, and I read out the words.

I got every single word wrong. And after that spelling test, I learned to stop raising my hand to save myself the humiliation.

It was like in that instant we were all pieces of wood in a shop. I wasn't like the rest, so someone decided to put me against a sanding belt and made me small and dull to make sure I didn't stand out, to make sure no one would notice me, yet still too valuable to throw away. I had forgotten who I was. The world had told me who I was gonna be.

It was fourth grade. I had to stay in at recess because I couldn't figure out these stupid math problems that tortured me endlessly through the page. My teacher finally let me go out to recess and I went to the playground to go find my friends. When I got there, I heard them talking about my brother—how he had to go to a special school because he was dumber than other kids. One of them said, "I wonder if stupidity is contagious?" Someone else answered, "It must be, look at

his sister." I went up to them and said, "You shouldn't say that stuff about people behind their backs." Their response was, "What are you gonna do about it?" They pushed me off the playground. I was winded and trying to catch my breath, as I lay on the ground, looking at my persecutors. The last thing they said to me was, "You should stay on the ground where you belong." I transferred schools a month later.

I was now finally at the amazing school where my brother went, the school that could fix all of my problems. Boy was I wrong. I came to school very cautious. I hadn't ever felt safe at school, so I was on guard for anything. The school day went by, nothing happened. I was ecstatic that this was finally my school.

All the bullying had stopped, but school didn't really get easier. I still couldn't turn in my homework on time and most of my assignments would get lost.

Over the years things got a little better. I started to care about school, which I know would surprise some people.

Now, of course, I still have a lot of obstacles to get through and a lot more strategies I need to learn, but I'm on a much better path than I was.

I would like to thank my parents. I wasn't the easiest child to raise. I was very hyper and got in a lot of trouble. Thank you for not disowning me and never giving up on me. Thank you to my friends at school who accepted

all my issues and my weirdness. Thank you to everyone who tried to destroy, break, or damage me, and you know who you are. You taught me the most important life lessons. As for my future, I hope to graduate high school. After that, I hope to join the navy and become an O-6, otherwise known as a captain.

So as Albert Einstein once said, "Everyone is a genius but if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid."

I started at this school as somebody else, I was beaten, defiled, lost, and hopeless. I hated the world and everyone in it. I came with bruises and scars thinking I was broken and unfixable. Now I am leaving strong, brave, independent, hopeful. I will always have my struggles, the world will always try to change me and the person I am.

But it will not prevail.

Yes, I am still as broken and scared as I was when I came here. But last time I checked, broken crayons still color.

To my fellow peers: This is your life, your story, your book. Do not let anyone else write it and do not apologize for the edits you make. I ask everyone here to do me a little favor:

I want all of you to try and remember who you were before the world told you who you were gonna be. Then try to become that person.