



Experiences from Care Leavers

MY JOURNEY: A NEW SAFE SPACE FOR TEENS

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Eventually, every front door I walked through looked the same. The anxiety of walking through them also remained the same. Going into my 37th home was no easier than my 1st, but I just got better at hiding what I was actually feeling.

Every child finds themselves in foster care for different reasons, but one thing all these kids have in com-

mon is that they have been stripped of what is “normal” to them. Having everything that is normal and familiar taken away from you as a teenager makes your emotions much more heightened. It doesn’t matter how perfectly paired you are with your foster carers, or how amazing they may be, the environment is going to be alien to any kid walking into it.

I used to rock up with a binbag with my clothes in it

and was introduced to my new foster carers by either a social worker or the police, and that would be it. They would leave me there, go home to their family and have their tea. I truly admire the hard work and dedication it takes to take on the role of a social worker, but the truth is that they can’t really understand what a kid is going through if they haven’t gone through it themselves. In my opinion, you can read as many books as you want and go to as many conferences and training workshops as you want, but you still won’t understand how it feels to be left in a stranger’s home and told that this is the new place you’ll be living. It’s an extremely lonely place: these people may be brilliant, but, right then, when walking through that door, they are strangers.

This experience inspired me to create MY JOURNEY, a journal specially designed for teens in care. It supports them through the challenging transition, by giving them something they can control. I spent a long time researching resources available for teenagers entering the care system, but I struggled to find anything. There were lots of books for younger children and for foster carers themselves, but there was very little for teens, especially for those who were labelled “difficult”, like myself. Some organisations have online hubs that children can access, but what I have done differs from this. Putting pen to paper is such a personal experience. I look back at things I wrote when I was fourteen, which is over twenty years ago now, and it fills me with such emotion as I read it. I know that if those feelings were written on a screen, they wouldn’t get such a reaction.

This journal has been designed to help with the transition of going to a new home and the first few months of settling in. One of my favourite things is a section called “About Me”, which can be shared with foster carers. I’m sure every child has heard this sentence before: “help yourself to anything you want from the kitchen”. As much as that’s a great thing to hear, do you know how difficult it is for a kid to go and just get something out of somebody else’s cupboards? I can’t even begin to tell you the number of placements where I spent the first day or two hungry - I’m surprised my rumbling stomach didn’t wake up the whole household. This is no reflection on the carers, but rather the new environment the child finds themselves in. These worksheets help kids advocate for what they need and communicate in a way that gets these needs across much more easily.

Being a child in care is a very unique experience: it’s hard to understand what a child is going through unless you’ve been there yourself. These kids are our future and it’s up to us to try and stamp out the stigma attached to looked after children. There needs to be a shake up to stop these kids falling through the gaps. I just want to make a difference, no matter how small. As cliché as it sounds, if MY JOURNEY helps just one kid I’ll be a very happy woman. No child should ever feel like they don’t matter, regardless of the situation. Teenagers in the care system will always be a passion of mine and something I will always fight to change the system for, after all, someone has to. For every email of mine that gets ignored and every metaphorical door that’s slammed in my face, it just makes me more determined to be heard.

ABOUT MY JOURNEY

This unique journal is designed specifically for those undergoing the life-altering experience of entering the care system. It offers a safe, supportive space for young minds to express their thoughts, feelings, and dreams, helping them find their voice amidst the uncertainties of this new chapter. Inside MY JOURNEY young individuals will discover:

A Trusted Companion: This journal becomes a trusted friend, accompanying them through the ups and downs of their journey, providing solace and support when needed the most.

Self-Discovery: Thoughtful prompts and exercises encourage self-reflection, self-expression, and self-empowerment. Young readers will explore their passions, strengths, and the limitless potential that lies within.

Coping Strategies: Transitioning into the care system can be overwhelming. “MY JOURNEY” equips readers with coping strategies, mindfulness exercises, and stress-relief techniques to build resilience and inner strength.

A Record of Growth: As they fill the pages, young individuals will create a tangible record of their personal growth and development, providing a source of inspiration and motivation during challenging times.

Dreams and Goals: This journal inspires tweens and teenagers to dream big and set achievable goals. It guides them toward envisioning a brighter future and taking the necessary steps to make those dreams a reality.

Connection: Through the pages of “MY JOURNEY,” readers will find a sense of belonging and connection with others who may be going through similar experiences. It encourages them to share their thoughts, feelings, and insights with trusted adults or mentors.

“MY JOURNEY” is more than just a blank canvas; it’s a lifeline, a guiding light, and a testament to the resilience of young hearts. Whether you’re a young person embarking on this journey or a caregiver looking to provide support, this journal offers a bridge to hope, healing, and a brighter future.

Empower young minds to navigate their path with courage, grace, and optimism by gifting them “MY JOURNEY.” It’s a powerful tool for fostering self-discovery, resilience, and a sense of belonging during one of life’s most challenging transitions.

Find MY JOURNEY here:

https://www.amazon.co.uk/My-Journey-Pixy-B/dp/BOCKN7TD-FY/ref=mp_s_a_1_1?crid=309KY3N64K77C&keywords=pixy+b&qid=1698088932&prefix=%2Caps%2C114&sr=8-1