

ADVERSITY AND RESILIENCE



A PERSONAL STORY

BY MAISY BENTLEY

I am Maisy Bentley, a young woman who at 16 started a charity, a young woman who has traveled the world with the UN, a young woman who is a published author and play write, a young woman who tells her story to thousands through public speaking. The young women who didn't wait for approval. The young women who saw an issue and sought to fix it. The young women who inspires change and influences leaders. Strong, talented, ambitious and driven.

I am also the young girl who sat awake at night crying, the young girl who lay in bed and felt her heart slow to an unnerving pace and felt nothing but comfort in the idea of slowly drifting away. The young girl who broke her own skin and emptied her own stomach, as the young girl whose body was so weak she could not stand without her world falling down. The young woman who missed 2 years of her education, the young woman who lay in a hospital bed, malnourished, indisposed, depressed, anxious, lost.

I speak to you today as both of these women, and I am proud to do so.

High school is never easy for anyone but it went partially haywire for me. Spent most of year 9 in hospital with multiple very serious physical and mental health conditions. It took a lot of support from my family, friends, doctors and nurses to get me back to health and even then there was more barriers to over come.

I was extremely behind on all my school work. I was disconnected from social groups and I was no longer involve in any of my extra curricular activities. After 3 years fighting for my life, I knew this was doable, I completed both level 1 and 2 NCEA in a single year both at merit level, joined extra curricular groups. But I didn't get recognised for my academic ability or get the leadership roles I put myself forward for.

Maybe this wasn't as doable as I thought.

I needed to carry on building my resilience but despite what we are always led to believe, resilience isn't always just getting up and going again. The most resilient people take time to sit on the floor when they've been knocked over and take the time to figure out how to get back up, how to not get knocked down if the same thing happens again, what is so appealing about not getting up? and anything else that will help them carry on moving forward.

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So after a little bit of time on the floor I got back up and now a year later, I didn't need the leadership positions because I continued to put in the hard work I had been doing over the past 2 years and the team developed an extensive project, used as a case study by the ministry of education, presented all across the country.

I didn't need to get recognized for my academic achievements because next year I graduated 2nd in class and attending university on 3 different scholarships.

My advice to any high school student is to not be disenfranchised by the institution. School often tries to remind us that we have to fit with in a certain box to be 'smart' or be a 'leader' but everyone is different and everyone is valuable. People have different levels of smarts in different areas, anyone can be a leader and diversity in leadership is extremely valuable. If your school doesn't see you as a leader, that's fine. Mine didn't either and that didn't stop me. As cliché as it sounds you literally can do anything. Find people who value you. Know where your strengths lie and go after what you want.

For anyone who is facing adversity I want to remind you that resilience isn't always just about getting up and running again, take some time to sit on the floor, reflect upon the adversity you are facing, why it is happening, what are you doing, what more can you do. Build a support network of family and friends, create a tool kit of things that make you happy, calm you down, align yourself with a mentor, weather it is family, a friend, someone from a service such as mentor me collective or even a professional such as a counselor or therapist.

The best way to stay motivated is to celebrate the wins. Success is a combinations of wins and losses, reflect upon the losses and remember to celebrate the wins, notice what went right and why it was a success, these wins will give you motivation and energy to push through the losses. If you only focus on the losses it will get you down and drain you. Remember why you're doing this and celebrate every time you get close to that goal.

I found my passion through my adversity. I was facing death, or a life that was not worth living. I had to really dig deep and define why I wanted to live, what I wanted to do, I needed to find something that was going to remind me why I was fighting even on the hardest days. Don't force your passion. You cannot force yourself to be passionate about something, reflect upon what you are doing and what you want to be doing, find the underlying passions and nurture them, let them grow naturally.

Celebrate the wins, don't be disenfranchised by the institution, find people who value you, define your why and don't hesitate to create the change you wish the see in the world.

