

Surviving Difficult Times Essays

(Names have been changed to protect identities)

Ryan E. Age 10

Winner of 1st Place Prize for ages 7-10

The first time I encountered a difficult time in my life, it was one of the saddest days that I can remember. For instance, when I got taken away from my mother, I cried and cried. I still have lot of memories and dreams about her. With lots of help from my two therapists, my life, faith and heart all have new destinies.

The second difficult time in my life was when I had to keep on moving from foster home to foster home. I have moved to about six different homes now, and that has not changed my great hope for waiting my turn to get adopted. My faith is really high right now. My caseworkers have, both, done a terrific job supporting me. They have even put me in a great agency, and all together, I have survived.

*

Ziggy Age 14

They were when my mom died and my dad went to jail.

When I found out my mom was sick, I felt very sad and angry. But we got past the bad times. I would help take care of her. She was very special. At times, I would fix her meals and do her laundry or comfort her the way I know best. She was a great mother. She took care of me the best she could. I feel at peace. I know she is in heaven.

When my Dad went to jail, it was very hard because he needed to take care of me after my mom died. That is when I came to the system. I have been in and out of 10 different homes. I hope some day to get adopted so I can stay in one home. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

*

Kitt Age 12

Winner of 1st Place Prize for ages 11-14

Agitating they are! They're always there when you least expect them. They slither upon you like an emotional python. I am talking about difficult times. Almost all human beings go through them. Difficult times, such as school, teenhood, and changes, are the geneses of stress. Statistics have proven that a majority of people suffer from stress when they're going through these times. These times can cause tense muscles, less control, and low self esteem. Although these problems cannot be solved, you can at least try something to loosen up the stress and gain confidence in your daily life.

Tension is one of the biggest problems in difficult times. Muscles get real drawn up and need to be relaxed. Tight muscles can cause you not to be focused. A soothing bath can

warm and calm your nerves to loosen up the strain in your muscles. You can also do exercises to stretch out the muscles that are really tight.

These incompatible times make you lose control of your day. The difficulties of the day will make you overwhelmed and cause you to lose control. When you're feeling like this, it's always a good time to read an easy book. This will give you control of only the book, and help you gain your control.

We all know that self-esteem is what we all gain and lose. Self-esteem is one of the major targets when going through these difficult times. After you get tense and lose control, you're probably saying, "I can't do anything." This is when you should take over and take a long nap. The nap will loosen all of your symptoms and relax your mind into a deep peaceful dream.

Difficult times are the alpha of all times and most people cannot do anything about them. The strain of the day will make you tense, lose control and have low self-esteem. These problems will not easily go away. Difficult times are what everybody goes through. You should take control of these times and have a good life.

*

PoemGirl 17 Age 17

Winner of 3rd Place Prize for ages 15+

When I grow up, I will never put my children through any of the stuff that I went through as a child. It's surprising to look back at my life and think of all the times I wanted to end it, but I'm still here. I try to look to the future for comfort when I'm feeling down. It all started when I was ten years old. I wasn't a perfect child but I was happy with the way life had been going for me. I didn't have the most perfect family but we all show our love in different ways. Everything was going pretty good in our family. My mom had a decent boyfriend.

Our school decided to throw a fundraising benefit at K-Mart. My sister and I really wanted to go, it sounded fun. We begged and pleaded with our mom to take us and she finally gave in. We get there and we have our fun while moms roaming around. As we're leaving, mom tells us she met someone and she wanted us to meet him. (If only I know that he held the key to disaster.)

He came over to our house the same day (I could tell mom was hooked.) He was so nice and seemed to be such a great dad to his two kids. For the next few months he continued to come over and spend time with my mom and take us out to dinner. We would go to his house and spend time with him and his kids.

Little by little his actions were getting more suspicious. He started controlling my mom by not letting her do certain things. Before everyone knew it, she wasn't allowed to talk to her friends or family, she stopped taking my little sister and I to our sports or anywhere. Pretty soon, she wasn't allowed to go anywhere without him, and if she did, he had to know where she was going and what time she'd come back.

Eventually he started being physically abusive to her behind closed doors and he would be emotionally abusive to her right in front of us. The loving father he pretended to be to his kids and my sisters and I was nothing but a lie. He whipped his kids daily with a belt. I felt so bad for my mom and I constantly felt like it was my fault because I couldn't do anything to stop it. She was trapped and he made her feel so lonely, pathetic and helpless. I tried to stand up to him but he hated it and he would be more and more emotionally abusive to me.

At the time he was hitting us too. Not as much as he was slapping around my mom though. I remember her crying at night because he hit her but she'd never say why she was crying. I cried for her, hoping that it would ease the pain and make it go away. I would cuss him out constantly but he'd only cuss me out back. I'd threaten to call the cops but I was too scared of where I'd end up. I didn't want to leave my mom, if she was going to be put through that, she would not be alone. I was there for her and I always will be.

Of course, it's not like my mom liked being put through that, she tried to leave him but he would follow her and call her and all her family and try to brainwash them. One time mom stayed away from him for four months but he found her and they got back together. She didn't tell me, she sneaked around because she knew I'd be angry. He kidnapped her and held her hostage at his house, I was so worried, I stayed up all night waiting for her. I tried to call but he disconnected the line. After she got back, she told me that he kidnapped her.

After three years of being emotionally and physically abused, she finally made the decision to break up with him once and for all. She'd had enough and so had her kids. It was extremely hard because during the three years she would break up with him and we'd all think it was over and we could get back our lives and finally be happy. A few weeks later, he'd be back in her life terrorizing her and us.

He's been gone for almost five years now. I count my blessings daily. I think if she hadn't of made up her mind to leave him, she wouldn't have had a mind to make up, he would have killed her.

For a long time I blamed my mom for what happened because I was so screwed up in the head. I didn't realize that she tried to break free but he would let go. It was his fault and what goes around comes around.

As for me I took the beating the hardest because I would always stand up for my mom and sisters and get shot right back down even lower. Not only that, I felt like I had an army but I was the only one fighting. I pray that he never does this to anyone else and that he got help.

I've been through a lot because of this one person and it amazes me to know that JUST ONE PERSON could cause so much pain. I stopped going to school because I got so

depressed and I was always worried about my mom. I ended up in some pretty back places because of not going to school. I often wish I could turn back time and avoid that one thing but I can't. I've learned a lot from what I've been through. I'm a whole new person. I can write poetry and creative stories.

I'm actually quite successful. I'm a senior in high school; I'll be graduating in June. The family's doing okay now, we'll never be the same, well at least I won't be the same but we're getting normal...

I hope by writing this I can make people see that they are not alone. There is help but you just have to ask for it. This is the most difficult thing I've ever been through but I'm still here. I see myself as a survivor, striving to live and be happy, I'm almost there.

*

Shannon-Noel Age 16

I have survived, and am still surviving difficult times. It all started in June of 1987, a beautiful baby girl was born, me. My parents were so happy because I was their first born child, so I was told. Within three years my two sisters were born. Our mother passed away in a car accident. My dad was devastated. About a year later, my family moved upstairs from my aunt. Boy, was that a mistake.

My sisters and I lived there with our dad for almost two years, until my aunt decided to lie. My aunt decided to go to court, lie to the judge, by telling him that our dad was mistreating us. Of course, because she worked for CPS she had won the case.

After living with her for about four years, she began to beat my sisters and I, mainly me. She would beat us for the dumbest reasons, a few examples: I wore a dress to school and for playing hide-and-seek at my babysitter's house. Sometimes I thought she did it for fun. My aunt had beaten us for nine years. Within those nine years, my dad tried with all his might to get us back. After about thirty thousand dollars and our letter to court, our dad had won us back.

We lived with our Dad for about three years and that's where everything went downhill. After living with him for a year, I began to drink and smoke pot. I was always hanging out with the wrong people and getting in trouble. In May 20__ I went to a halfway house. I stayed there for a month so my dad and I could cool off. While I was there, my dad got arrested because a girl accused him of rape.

Due to my dad losing custody of us, my caseworker, told me that I had to move in with my aunt. Right there I threatened to kill her and myself. After coming home from school, Debbie had told me that I was going to go to a psychiatric hospital.

Two months passed while I was in the psychiatric hospital. My therapist and I came to the conclusion that I definitely could not go to my aunt's house and it was not time to go back with my dad, so I was sent to a foster family. I went through a lot of hard times in

the hospital. I promised myself that I would never say or do anything stupid again to go back there.

It's been almost five months now and everything is fine. There are times that I either get blamed for things missing. My foster sister and I fight, and I just feel like moving back with my dad, or out of the house. In my opinion, it is better for me because I feel much safer. I've met new friends that I get along with better and I'm doing well in school. My relationship with my dad is also improving, and I'm happier. My relationship with the foster family is ok but we have our ups and downs. I must say though I am thankful that they have allowed me to move. Due to them taking me in, my relationship with my dad is getting stronger.

*

L'il Moma Age 17

It's not unusual for people to experience difficult times. Some are easier to overcome than others some pierce the heart indefinitely and some pass by quickly. The most important key is surviving them, and grow smarter from each one.

In my short seventeen years I've been through, it seems, everything. From growing up in the projects, starving, having irresponsible parents-they are strung out, being molested, getting in any possible trouble, getting put in state's custody, abusing and selling drugs. It's amazing everything I've survived!

I was born while my Mamma was married, but seeing another man. We shortly moved in with her boyfriend after she had my two sisters. We grew up in the projects as the only white kids, but we fit in. We had roaches, of course, and rats the size of kittens. We hardly ever showered, wore the same clothes for several days, and later acquired lice from school. Our electricity and water were almost always turned off. We used candles for light, and saved plastic bottles to put water in. My mamma got checks and food stamps every month for us, but we still went hungry for about two weeks out of the month. I caught on why. My mamma and "daddy" were crack addicts.

We lived like this for years. At age nine I was molested and moved to an aunt's. I went and lived with my grandmother when I was twelve, along with my middle sister. It seemed, as we got older our behavior got out of control. I was experimenting with drugs, and sneaking out frequently. I lied constantly to my grandmother and disregarded all of her rules. I did what I wanted, and secretly started abusing cocaine.

During my first year in high school I began to smoke weed and have sex, but was quickly perceived as "easy." I hid everything like a pro. My worst nightmare came true after three years. My grandmother sent me and my sister off to state's custody. We all got separated, and I got bounced around until I got with a wonderful foster family. But after a short three months I took advantage of their trust.

I began smoking weed almost everyday, and partying every weekend. I lied about who I was with, where I was, and what I was doing. I left home high and came home higher.

My foster parents weren't dumb, and caught on. I would do good for about a month, then get drawn right back into it. One day, I got a bright idea. Sell drugs to make money, I got away with it for a while, but then got sent to a group home.

That woke me up quick. I was there for forty-two days. They were the most painful days of my life, I realized, once again, I was away from my family. I was lonely, and fed up. I knew I had to straighten up before I ended up in jail with my parents. I thought I couldn't survive or get out of there.

Now three months later, I am stronger and more determined than ever. I am eager to graduate a whole year early and live life safely. I intend on getting my massage therapy licenses, and becoming a productive citizen. I wouldn't have made it this far without going through the struggles I have. It's made me realize that no matter my situation or how hard I'm struggling I can SURVIVE!

*

Sika Age 15

It was the big day for a lot of students who were graduating from high school. Every one in high school was crying except for some 12th graders who knew that they'd keep in touch. Some will move on with their lives, get married, and have kids.

One week later every one's yelling "Graduation's here!" and talking about what they're doing that night. Our teachers called it to our attention that this had been a wonderful class. We're proud to send you all off to college to start another big step of your lives. They started to call the students one by one. Finally they called me. By the time I got up to get my diploma, the clouds started to cover the sun. Now it had been pretty all day, but when I started walking it just so happened to start raining.

After graduation it was still raining. Some classmates and I went out to party. A lot of people were drinking and doing stupid things, so we left. We were going home when a drunk driver hit us, and made the car flip 6 times. Although we had our seat belts on, two of my classmates died, I got air lifted to the closest hospital, my friend went to the emergency to get checked but was ok. All she had was some bruises.

Two hours had passed when my mom, dad, brothers, and sisters were in my room. I heard the doctor say my classmates did not make it, and I probably wouldn't have either had it not been for the seat belt and air bag.

The next day a lot of people found out what happened on that rainy night. I can hear my mom, dad, brothers, sister-in-laws and boyfriend crying and praying, asking god why he let this happen to them. I can hear and feel my mom holding as I lie and die, telling me to be strong and not leave.

It's five years later and everyday I go to visit my friends' graves. I still talk to them like we were still face to face. My little girl asks about them because I have all their pictures in my memory book and she looks at it all the time. I have told her that they would have been her aunts.

My surviving friend and I are still close just like sisters; she loves my daughter just like she was her real niece. I really miss my other two friends. I miss when we used to study and go on dates together. When you saw one of us, you saw all four of us. We were behind each other 100% all the way no matter what. R. is getting married tomorrow and we both wish that A. and S. could be there. It's been five years and three months since the accident. Today was first time I'm taking my daughter to their grave and she talked to them like she had known them all her life.

*

Beatrice L. Age 16

Winner of 1st Place Prize for ages 15+

Hello, my name is Beatrice. I am 16 years old, I have been in foster care for 1 year, in that year I felt like my world had come to an end and that I had no meaning in my life. But with the help from people that worked with me I have found out differently. At first I really wanted to give up on everything, but the staff members at TPI wouldn't let that happen and without them I wouldn't have come to the conclusion that I am special and that I am a person who deserves to be loved.

I also found out that what I went through is not my fault and I have strength that I never knew I had. I have come a long way to give up now. I wrote this poem to let other people know you can survive. In fact this is my story in poetic form about how I survived a tough time.

Mom

I never asked to be born, for my heart you have torn
So full of hate, life with you has been like a locked gate
You never seemed to realize you had two children, not one
All day long I was alone, and of course it was no fun

Sometimes, I need you, but you're not around
I want to see you fall flat on the ground
Mom, where are you now that I need you
What would you do if I were to die with the Flu

Now and then you act like you care
But, you know what? Life's not fair
You saw what I was going through
Probably don't even know my favorite color is blue

Mom, now that I think of it I'm not even mad
I really understand you just wanted to give me a dad
We both know you could've done better
Now you won't even send me a letter

All night I lay in my bed to cry

Just to let you know I really want to die
Tire of living life alone
You won't even talk to me on the phone

All of these years I've realized
I'd rather live in the starry skies
Didn't care when you saw us fight
Basically, mom you laughed at my fright

You have put me through a lot of pain
Feels like I've been hit by a train
You really wanted to throw me away

You felt like I needed to pay
I always got the blame
You said I really put you to shame

I didn't do anything wrong
You wouldn't know I really am strong
How could you treat a person so bad?
In my heart I was always sad

Now I'm starting to forget about it
But, it really hurt when I got hit
Yes, I forgive you mom
Even though you didn't go to my prom

No matter what you always had an excuse
Thought you actually liked the abuse
After you put me through mom
I can honestly say I still love you.

*