

Samantha

My name is Samantha and I am 15 years old and currently in the 9th grade attending High School in central Nebraska. I am passing most of my classes now. In the future I plan on attending college and getting a degree, probably in cosmetology. Then I plan on getting a job, get married and have kids. Beyond that I don't know what I'm going to do.

My strengths and hobbies are: drawing, art, singing, reading, knitting, crocheting, and my family. I am very determined, friendly, funny, kind, caring, and good at listening. I am learning how to be a good leader in my YES group. I am a representative on the youth council.

I have been diagnosed with ADHD, Bipolar Disorder, and a form of Narcolepsy. Being ADHD, means I can be very hyper at times or can't concentrate for very long. I also lose things and I am not very organized. My bipolar makes me have down days where I don't talk much and keep to myself or be the opposite where I am very hyper and talk all the time. I don't do these things on purpose they are just part of my disorder.



I have had an IEP for as long as I can remember. It has been for behavior. I am very smart and have a very high IQ. I had to go to the resource room to do my work a lot because I was so distractible. They also helped me to get organized or help me find my stuff.

In my life I have lived in a lot of foster homes. By the time I was 8 I was in 5 different foster homes. I got adopted by my 5th foster family. I still live with them today. In the beginning the support I got from my family was very minimal and I got in a lot of trouble in the community. I got teased almost all the time too. Since I have been adopted things have gotten better because my parents are very supportive and I don't get in as much trouble or teased as much. My parents take me to all of my Y.E.S.* meetings, youth meetings, and when we spread the word about mental health issues.

* Y.E.S. (Youth Encouraging Support) is a program for youth with emotional, mental and/or behavioral challenges sponsored by Families CARE a family organization in central Nebraska.

Last year I ended up in a RTC or residential treatment center. I didn't like going there very much. I didn't like being away from my home, family, and friends. But I did learn to be better while I was in the RTC.

What helped me the most in school have been my friends and some of my teachers. Some of my favorite teachers are: Mrs. K., Mrs. T., Mrs. E., and Mrs. H. because they teach my favorite classes. It has helped me a lot when teachers take the time and help me find my homework and don't get mad at me. Most of the time I have my homework done, I just can't find it. Also what has helped is giving me clear and reasonable expectations, being patient with me, and understanding when I really don't feel good. I think it would be a good idea if everyone would get more education about mental health disorders and what they can expect from their students.

I came to help give advice to help you help us do better. First, stop the teasing and bullying in school. I also wish teachers wouldn't punish me outside their classroom. What I mean by that is don't punish for something I did in math class for something I did in English class. When I don't understand something you said or an assignment, explain it better or differently, don't keep repeating yourself because it doesn't help. You have to treat each of us as individuals. Just because we may have the same disorder doesn't mean we don't need different rules or expectations. For example: If you give me a loophole, I'll take advantage of it, but some of my other friends with the same disorder need you to be more flexible. Remember we are NOT the same even if we have the same diagnoses.



Please don't act like you know what we're going through because you know someone with similar problems. It is difficult enough living with these problems without assuming you understand it. This isn't helpful. We don't want you to feel sorry for us; we want you to help us. Try and find ways to help us not stand out differently from other people. Don't make us stand out in front of our peers-if you have something to say to us whether it's good or bad, please do it private. We don't want to stand out and be different than our peers, but to be just like other kids you call "normal". Because "normal" is what we are. If you are patient and understanding that is exactly what you will find out. THANK YOU.

Samantha, Age 15
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Nebraska