

“I AM BETTER OFF”

Suzy's Story



Suzy sat wedged into the corner of the large, overstuffed couch in the “living room” of the counseling center. She was a young lady, all of 18 years old—a woman with a little baby of nine months, yet still a girl, hair pulled back in a pony tail and traces of teenage skin affliction on her youthful face—a gentle reminder of her tender age.

She was in a hurry, she explained, because she was moving into her new trailer home in South Sacramento. So many things to think of at such a young age, I thought to myself. How many of us know what it is like to be working on completing a high school diploma, taking care of a 9 month-old, and adjusting to a new living situation – all at once? Suzy went on, *“My family was kind of a ‘Leave It To Beaver’ kind of family at first,” she explained, “until I was about 7 ½. Then my parents got divorced; my sister was born; my cousin got killed; my grandparents died. . .there was just a lot of tragedy. I was raped and my mom got together with an abusive boyfriend.”*

Suzy also struggled with school. *“I have trouble concentrating when more than a couple of people are speaking and have to read things over and over to comprehend them. In 8th grade I was in school maybe a month and they passed me! None of the teachers seemed to pick up on anything I was going through. I needed support in school and was not getting it from my teachers.”*

“I first encountered the Alliance services when I was required by CPS to take a parenting class after my boyfriend was busted for selling drugs. I learned a lot about how my experience as a child is different from being a parent. A parent sees actions and consequences. For example, my sister used to say ‘I hate you,’ and that hurt my feelings. In parenting class I learned how to talk with my sister and understand her point of view. In turn, there were a lot of things I didn’t know – that didn’t even cross my mind. Sexual abuse, for example. I never knew that that stuff happened or could happen! I basically raised my sister when my mom went through her stuff, like her abusive boyfriend. There’s a lot of stuff in parenting class I wish I had known back then, like the appropriate use of spanking and what chemicals to keep out of baby’s reach!”

“The Alliance programs also helped beyond the parenting classes,” Suzy went onto explain. “There were the holiday baskets of food If you’re low on money it is hard – especially at Thanksgiving when you don’t have a turkey. But parenting class was definitely the most important part of the program to me. The social workers still keep in touch even though I am done with the parenting class. I still talk with my social workers not because I have to but because I get along with them.”

“Despite the challenges in my life, I still want to earn my high school diploma, go to American River and get a medical technology certification. I love the medical field. My sister is epileptic and I let everyone around her know what to do if she has a seizure. My most important goal, however, is the happiness of my baby. I want everything to be better for my child...especially when it comes to learning. Everyone has a different way of learning, you know?”

“I have been invited by an Early Connection worker to participate in a group that focuses on grant writing for the Mothers and Sons program. I think the program could use the grant money to start a support group for parents to support their students in school. A lot of parents tend to drop off after the sixth or seventh grade when it comes to helping their kids. I think it would be great to have a program that kept the parents involved throughout their kid’s school experience. A lot of teenagers don’t ask for help, but I needed the help! Every student can be successful with the right support.”

“A lot of stuff that has happened in my life has changed me into a better person. Instead of making it worse I’ve turned it around and made it better. My mom is better now, has a job and goes to school. Although she knows about the Alliance services, she is busy getting things straightened out on her own. We are supportive of each other, though – best friends. Everyone needs counseling -we all have problems. I have my daughter and my boyfriend and I am better off for the parenting classes.”

