



GROWING UP
GREENBRIER

ACADEMY FOR GIRLS




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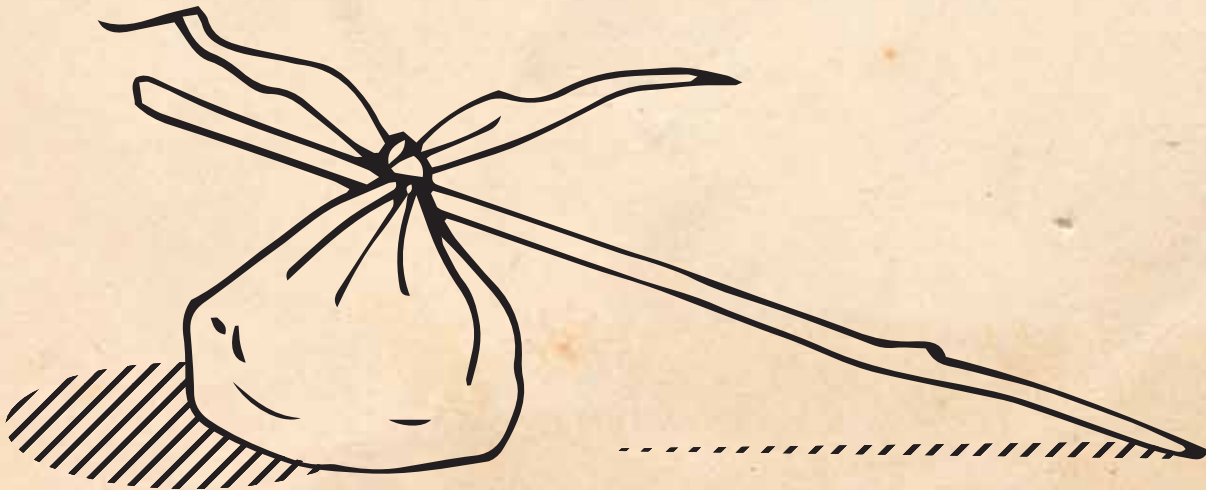
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CHAPTER

1

And the Journey Begins...



And the Journey Begins...

It was 7:25 A.M. on a Monday morning.

The transporters would be here in about five minutes to pick me up and take me to Pence Springs, West Virginia where I would be attending Greenbrier Academy for Girls.

As I hauled my exhausted and completely hung-over self up the stairs, I saw all my stuff sitting next to the door, ready to be loaded into the transporter's car and probably never to be returned to this house again.

The transporters arrived and then it all happened so fast. My stuff was put in the car and my mom was trying to hug me goodbye and before I knew it, I was in the backseat with some strange woman sitting next to me and we were driving away. To be honest, I was completely confused. It didn't seem real that any of this was actually happening. I was in complete denial about everything going on in my life and I pointed the blaming finger at anyone but myself. I was filled with overwhelming sensations of anger, sadness, and especially loneliness.

When we pulled into the driveway and parked outside the school, I was filled with this uneasy feeling and I wished at that moment I could go back in time and fix things so I never would have been sent here. Although I didn't realize it yet, this was the start of a transformation that occurred within me that would completely change my life for the better.



CHAPTER

2

Having to Finally Face the Truth



Having to Finally Face the Truth

The first memory I have as a student at GBA was the overwhelming positivity and welcoming that everyone showed me my first couple days here. There wasn't a moment that I was left alone. All the girls really went out of their way to make me feel welcome and part of the community. But even with all of this positive energy flowing around, my first couple of months here were really hard.

I missed my family, but I missed my friends and the life I used to have even more. I viewed this school as a punishment for all the drinking and partying I had been caught doing, all the sneaking out and sneaky behaviors, the horrible and basically non-existent relationship I had with my mom, etc. I could go on with all the reasons I had been sent here, but you probably get the picture.

Before I got sent away, I never really had girlfriends. My "best friend" at home was my best friend because we snuck out together, we skipped school together, we got drunk together, we did everything that we considered "fun" and "important" together. Our relationship was based on such superficial and immature things.

As I continued to get settled into Greenbrier, it became much harder for me to make and sustain friendships among the girls because a healthy relationship was something I never had experienced before.

I had more than my fair share of drama and tension and since I was giving off such negative vibes, that's exactly what I was attracting. I sought out external validation from everyone and I wouldn't do things unless I knew it would be externally validated. My group of friends was anything but supportive and I didn't seem to understand the concept of "guilty by association" because even if I wasn't doing anything wrong, I was still associated with those who were and I was therefore just as guilty.

I had little to no trust within the community and my reputation was pretty bad, too. Things weren't much better between me and my



mom either. We had some pretty rough and intense phone calls and there was a lot of hurt feelings and broken trust that would take time to fix.

Our first parent program was in October and we were all really anxious about how that would go. Every family is affected by parent program differently and some families benefit from it more than others. My mom really gained the most from this experience because it offered her insight and perspective on how other families are going through

very similar things. It helped her realize that she isn't some "terrible mom who has failed at raising her child". She gained more confidence in herself, which as a result, helped me gain more confidence as well.

Soon after our first parent program was an upcoming intercession, Thanksgiving/November break. Between me, my mom, and my therapist; we decided that I could go home for four days if I promised to abide by the rules and conditions that would be put into place. I promised I would follow them and I went home for my first time in five months. It isn't hard to guess what happened next.

Obviously, I wasn't ready to go home for a break. I knew how to act just fine and say all the right things, but to be honest, nothing was different, and I was still the same person I was when I got sent away. I didn't follow any of the rules that we had agreed upon and I snuck out, saw people I was not supposed to be seeing, stole my mom's phone one night when I went out, abused my computer privileges, and lied to my mom countless times. I had gone against my word and the tiny amount of trust that I had earned back with my mom was now gone, and there was very small hope that I would ever get it back.

I could continue and write about each and every step of the way along my challenging journey at Greenbrier. Instead, I'm going to focus on the most important things to me, the things that really impacted me the most and helped me get to the place where I am today.

CHAPTER

3

Falling Over Face First, But Getting Up Stronger Each Time



Falling Over Face First, but Getting Up Stronger Each Time

At Greenbrier, we are really challenged to be honest with ourselves and look into what our core belief is that has been holding us back. For example, my core belief was that I was never going to be good enough, that I was broken and could not be fixed, that I was impossible to be loved, and that I was different from others and that wasn't ok. Because in my core I believed this about myself, no wonder I had been doing the things I was. You act in a way based off of how you feel. I felt worthless and broken, and therefore I subconsciously did things that reinforced that belief.

It wasn't until I traced back to the origin of those beliefs and figured out how they were formed and developed over time, that I was able to start changing them.

Looking back, there wasn't one specific moment that was a turning point for me, rather a collection of experiences and realizations. I've always been pretty stubborn, and most times I learn things the hard way. It took me having to lose absolutely everything in order for me to really turn myself around, where inside of me and since I was giving off positive energy; I was now attracting positive people.

I became really close with girls who I wasn't really close to at all before, but now that I had gotten over myself and all the immature and petty crap I used to be so involved in, I was able to create and sustain friendships with girls who are still my close friends to this day.



After everything that happened over my November break, me and my mom didn't speak for a long time. She told me I was never allowed home again and I was basically on my own from that point on. I had lost almost everything, but the one thing that neither me nor my mom lost was hope.

Every time we had a scheduled phone call, both of us showed up. It didn't matter how hard it was or how angry we were at each other, we pushed through and that's because we love each other and we both had hope that things could one day be better.

As time went by, things started to get better. It started with changes I made within myself. I finally realized that my image in the community was not how I wanted it to be, nor how I really am on the inside. If I wanted to change my image, I was going to have to work hard to show everyone what my true colors really were and that I'm better than the way I had been acting thus far. I can't recall the specific moment in time when I started changing my ways, but I started giving off positive energy.

There was a shift that happened somewhere inside of me and since I was giving off positive energy; I was now attracting positive people. I became really close with girls who I wasn't really close to at all before, but now that I had gotten over myself and all the immature and petty crap I used to be so involved in, I was able to create and sustain friendships with girls who are still my close friends to this day.

CHAPTER

4

Persevering Through the Trials and Tribulations



Persevering Through the Trials and Tribulations

During this shift is when I really started to pay more attention to the aspirations, which is a crucial component of this program and its effectiveness. To sum up what the aspirations are, they are five challenges that help us to acquire character attributes in re-creating our personal identity. As you move up along the aspirations, you get more privileges and freedoms, etc. but that is not the point of the aspirations.

Contrary to what many girls believe, moving onto higher aspirations like Humility & Honor and Trust is not all about the privileges you earn like Facebook or cell phone use. Although these privileges may be nice to have, earning these aspirations is a way of marking how much progress you've made along your journey and a way to show the rest of the community the hard work you've been doing.

When I first came to GBA, I started off on the first aspiration, Respect and Gratitude. I moved up to the second one, Courtesy and Compassion, in just about three weeks' time and thought this all was going to be fairly easy.

I looked up to the higher aspiration girls in the community and I told my therapist in one of my first sessions that before I left

Greenbrier that I wanted to make it to at least Humility, if not Trust. I had no idea how hard I was going to have to work to make that goal become a reality.

I moved off of the first two aspirations fairly quickly, I never had much respect or courtesy issues throughout my life so these weren't much of a struggle for me.



I was moved onto the third aspiration, Empathy and Forgiveness, in September and this is where all my work really began. Obviously, I knew what having empathy meant, but putting it into action was a whole different story. It was much easier for me to have empathy with my friends, but I couldn't understand how it was even possible to have empathy for someone who was doing dumb things or causing hell in the community. It was also really hard for me to have empathy for my mom when she was making me so angry all the time and getting under my skin with everything she said.

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