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Ms. WONG Miu-yan Cecilia

March 2025

My dear friend,

To look at, you would think Sweetie is just another teenager. She was born into a middle class family; had two siblings; went to a fairly good school etc... But what you see is not what you get!

As you can see from the story she herself tells, her growing up and development as a young women was very much a disaster. From being a very small child every minute of every day was decided by her parents. She was never given space to grow. Even sending her to a boarding school, supposedly to keep her out of trouble resulted in her being more alienated from her parents. From alienation grows rebellion and rejection. Even flowers need space to grow and our young people are much more important than flowers!

Fortunately, by accident, she met up with our Hip Hop crew and her life began to change. In the beginning her parents looked distrustfully at her strange, new hair style and clothes. But they reckoned if Youth Outreach was a registered youth center it can't be that bad. They are not bad people just parents who are worried about their daughter! You can see what ultimately happened from Sweetie's letter. Everyone, including herself and her parents ended up in tears. A happy ending indeed! All is well that ends well!

Sincerely,



Founder and Member of Youth Outreach
Peter Newbery

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Aloha! I am Sweetie. It was my pleasure to perform in the YO Dancical 2024 last year. I couldn't stop crying after the show ended. I got emotional not just because the performance was successful, but because of what my father said after 3 years of silence between us. He said, "Hey, Sweetie. I never thought you could be that good!" (This is the best compliment you can have from an Asian father.) He had never complimented or recognised me since the day I was born. Finally, I received my that first compliment after the show ended. I hugged him and burst into tears, as the thick cold wall that had existed between us broke into pieces.

Ever since I was born, I have felt that my parents were too strict with me. "Authoritarian" is how I would describe their parenting style. They always wanted me to follow their orders, telling me to do this and that. And they never hesitated to point out what I did wrong at any time. They would even bring up things from the past to criticise me. I found them really annoying and didn't feel care and love from them. As a result, I started wandering on the streets. I made a group of friends that I could go anywhere with and have fun wit. However, I slowly realised that they sometimes took advantage of me, like borrowing money from me which (sometimes) they would return. Of course, my parents found out about this and grounded me as a punishment. That time at home did not improve our relationships either. Instead, everything went the other way. I became more unwilling to stay home; I even started running away.

My parents arranged for me to attend a secondary boarding school because they felt that they could not handle me well. There, due to my unsatisfactory academic performance, I always struggled to feel any sense of achievement. On top of that, others found it difficult to get along with me, because I was self-centred and stubborn. I always had conflicts with others, where I would be blamed, and isolated by them. My confidence crashed and eventually I shut myself off from the other students. Despite that, I still felt being at that school was way better than being at home. Every weekend, it was a must for the students to get back home. My parents became stricter, maybe because they misunderstood me and did not trust me. They would even escort me home. During the two days at home, we did not have any meaningful conversations. For me, it felt more or less the same, no matter whether I was at home, at school, or among friends. I felt pressured, doubted, abandoned, and useless.

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Then one day, a group of dancers visited our school and introduced us to street dance. Their outstanding dance moves and the powerful rhythm of the music were indelibly printed in my mind. So, when the social worker asked us students to join the crew, I immediately raised my hand. However, I had no clue about dancing at all. In the first few lessons, I felt like I had two left feet and couldn't keep up with the rhythm. Previous negative feelings came flooding back to me. Pressured, doubted, abandoned, and useless. I wanted to give up. However, the instructors and social workers from Youth Outreach realised my struggles. They patiently guided and encouraged me throughout the lessons. They acknowledged my progress and improvements along the way. I gradually overcame my weaknesses and limitations. And all of this brought me a sense of achievement and confidence. I began to open up. I was also more willing to examine my own problems and even tried improving myself.

I was so pleased while still in the middle of the dancing lessons, that I was invited to perform in the YO Dancical. I never imagined that I could perform on a big stage, with a group of trusted teammates. I treasured this one-of-a-kind opportunity, so I really gave my everything to the training. I also became more self-disciplined. All the training sessions were held in the YO building. My mother frequently "escorted" me home because my parents still didn't fully trust me. But this created some opportunities for her to chat with the social workers here. Interestingly, it seemed like the social workers did some kind of magic. My mother gradually nagged less, and she became more friendly and approachable toward me. We even began to talk more. And I came to understand that my parents' strictness originated from their worry about me going astray. It was just their way of showing care for me.

On the day of the performance, I really wanted to invite my dad to come. But due to my pride, I simply left the ticket on the table without saying a word. The performance was a success. Everyone was so happy, and so was I. But what made me even happier was when I saw my parents walking up onto the stage and my dad saying what I mentioned at the beginning of this article. And the rest is history. Since then, our relationship has been continuously improving. For me, 19 May 2024, the Dancical at Sha Tin Town Hall, is a day and place that I will always remember.

Sweetie

March, 2025

Translated by Adrienne Tsang, Case Worker