

> empower



Profile A.J.

An open letter to At-Risk Youth

His father left before he was born. His mother had challenges that rendered her unable to take care of him. For his first 9 years, he learned that throwing tantrums and being provocative got him his own way. For the rest of his youth and most of his adolescence, he was in and out of foster homes.

Then A.J. came to Oolagen. >

“Whoever said that life was easy was clearly mistaken. Wait, did anybody ever say that? Who knows? I’m sure right now you wish that life was easy. Maybe you feel all alone while trying to solve life’s problems, and wondering how things got to be the way they are now. You are not alone.” >

My name is AJ and I’m 20 years old. I was once where you are now. During almost 9 years in the Children’s Aid Society (CAS), I lived in 16 different foster and group homes and had more than 100 caregivers. During that time, I also came in contact with hospitals and yes, even the court system. My time in care was extremely difficult for me and it became so bad that I tried to take my own life. Luckily, I didn’t succeed, but I had hit rock bottom.

People told me I was worthless and had no potential. Heck, I started to believe that too.

There comes a point where you realize you have hopes and dreams, and no matter what others say, you want to do whatever it takes for those hopes and dreams to come true. You need to find supportive people to make it happen. That’s when I turned to Oolagen for help.

Finding people who want to help you is the cool thing to do. Oolagen helped me realize that my hopes and dreams were realistic. They vowed to do whatever it took to help me achieve them.

Because of Oolagen’s help and support, I was able to keep a job for more than one year, go back to school, and win an award for outstanding performance. But most important of all, they motivated me to go to college.

For as long as I can remember, it was my dream to become a journalist. Oolagen helped me turn that dream into reality. They can help you turn your dreams into something real as well—but you need to take the first step. You need to tell them you need help.

They believe in you and I do too. I know what it’s like to feel helpless and lost, but you can turn your life around. I hope you’ll do so. Not for me, but for yourself. [You won’t regret it. I promise you!](#)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'A' followed by a horizontal line and a flourish that loops back under the 'A'.

A. J.