



PROGRESS

with Michael Bernoff

Teen
Edition

Jessica Christie
Getting Her Smile Back

Jessica Christie

Student

HOME

Phoenix, Arizona



Just a few years ago, Jessica Christie was a cheerful kid who had lots of friends. She was a happy girl with a smile on her face, did well in school and loved sports of all kinds. A girl that loves competition, it wasn't a rarity to see her tackling boys bigger than her on the football field just for the fun of it.

But then middle school rolled around and things changed. We all know middle school is tough, yet for others...like Jessi...it can be downright brutal. She was the subject of intense bullying, and while the stories and the details of what she experienced aren't important to drag through again...the impact was significant. Jessi began to withdraw from anything social and even gave up on sports. This once thriving girl was now a painfully shy teenager. "I didn't feel like I fit in because I wasn't smart or cool enough, and I didn't have enough confidence to try out for sports or talk to new people."

Last year, she began her freshman year at a new school where she knew nobody, feeling isolated and anxious. Each school day she was so nervous she was often physically ill.

Peer pressure, academic stress, and hormones make high school hard enough. Imagine going through all that feeling like you don't belong, too nervous to talk to the people around you every day, scarred by the memory of relentless bullies. She was too scared to try new things or approach people for any reason. This was Jessi's life.

Then one day, her grandmother, Brenda, came home grinning from ear to ear, radiating with newfound

confidence and positivity. Jessi was fascinated by the drastic change that Brenda had experienced, and she started asking questions. Brenda shared with Jessi that she had been to a three-day event that opened her mind to all of life's possibilities.

She also said that the next time this event came around, Jessi HAD to go.

Just the thought of attending a big event full of strangers made Jessi feel ill. For a shy teen who avoided putting herself out there in any way, the idea was scary, to say the least!

Yet six months later, Jessi went with Brenda to the event, Core Strength Experience. Despite her initial fears, she dove into CORE head first. During the course of three days, Jessi embraced the changes happening within herself. She let go of the pain and fear that had built up over the previous few years, and the real Jessi emerged. And not only did she allow herself to "play all out" at the event, she encouraged others to do the same. She left that event feeling strong and happy and confident... ready to take back her life.

And so she did. The very next Monday, Jessi had to deliver a presentation at school, which she had been dreading... actually, she was terrified! Yet when the time came for her to present, Jessi simply stepped in front of the class and nailed it.

The very same week she also tried out for the school's basketball team, despite never having played and not even knowing the rules of the

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game. She took a quote, “Decide and Do”, that she learned from Michael Bernoff (the results coach who hosts the Core Strength Experience event) and gave the tryout everything she had! And you guessed it... she made the team! This year, as a sophomore, Jessi is considered a valuable asset and now plays on both the JV and Varsity basketball teams!

And if those accomplishments aren't enough...Jessi is back on the honor roll. Her coaches and teachers praise her for encouraging other students and keeping a positive attitude.

Perhaps most importantly, Jessi's smile is back.

Jessi no longer bases her self-worth on gaining the approval of others. She has found a great group of friends who like her for who she is. Whenever a new student arrives at her school, Jessi always introduces herself and invites them to eat lunch with her and her friends so that no new kid has to feel alone.

She has also helped a friend start an outreach group at school. Jessi spends every Friday afternoon mentoring elementary kids to help them find ways to uplift others instead of bullying them. Jessi is helping these young kids become leaders instead of bullies. She is putting a stop to the bullying epidemic, one kid at a time.

Jessi loves animals and dreams of becoming a veterinarian someday. So a few weeks ago, she asked about internship opportunities at a local animal hospital. Instead, she was encouraged to apply for a part-time job! So at age 15, she researched how to write

a resume, how to ask people for letters of recommendation, and how to handle a job interview. The old Jessi would have avoided an interview at all costs!

Jessi got the job and is extremely proud of this accomplishment, even though it means giving up her weekends. Jessi said that “I've wanted to be a vet since I was little and so when I got to work at an animal hospital, it was like a dream come true!” She spends most of her time cleaning the facility, and she said confidently, “My job right now is to be a “mopper”... and I'm going to be the best mopper that I can be!”

So what does all this mean to Jessi? First, she attributes all the changes she's made to her Core Strength Experience. She shared...“CORE made me a stronger, confident, more independent person than I was a year ago.” She is proving that this is true every single day!

Most teenagers would rather not spend three days in a room full of strangers who are learning life-improving communication skills. It just goes to show you how ready and willing Jessi is to create an amazing life. “Even if you are hesitant about doing something for yourself, like attending an event, DO IT. Because you will find amazing new friends that you can talk to and will support you, and even if you only heard ONE THING that impacts you, it will influence you to find new ways to improve for your entire life.”



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Thoughts from Michael

on Getting Her Smile Back

It was obvious that Jessi had been dealing with some really tough challenges when she showed up for CORE. You could see the tension in her face and her hesitancy to speak up. She was in a lot of emotional pain that was so deep that it showed in her physical appearance. Going to school every day and feeling like she was surrounded by enemies had taken a toll. She was defeated at the young age of 14, which is heartbreaking.

Although I know she felt anxious about being around a bunch of strangers at CORE, Jessi was mature enough to understand that she had to "play all out" to reap the benefits, and that's just what she did. And let me tell you - watching the layers of sadness and frustration fall away, witnessing the real Jessi be revealed - it was one of the most moving transformations I've seen happen at a CORE event.

Jessi realized that she doesn't need the approval of others to get through the day. She doesn't have to conform to other people's definition of her. Jessi decided to leave all the people that had hurt her right where they should be...BEHIND HER. She knows that all she has to do is be herself. And as can be expected, when her confidence soared, the doors opened and now she has incredible relationships with true friends.

Now that's progress.

Today, Jessi is enjoying her life! She's excelling in every area of her life. Now is her time to make a difference in other teen's lives. Jessi isn't satisfied with being on the honor roll and the school's basketball team. She isn't okay with simply letting the bullies do what they do. She's fighting back. She's mentoring younger kids to be stronger more confident teens, before they are tempted to become bullies. And she faces every day with a smile on her face.

Now that's success.

Ready to begin really living your life?

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