

Transcription of the video: *Valerie's Story*

[Valerie] I want to share my voice. I want to share my experiences because I think they're important for teachers, for administrators to understand.

[Valerie] I was so anxious you know when the teacher asked you to read. I was a ball of anxiety. I would cry in a corner rocking myself. It...I would rather be dead than go to school. It was that bad not which was very scary because suicide does run in my mom's side family and that made me at much higher risk for it. Especially when I was sixteen-fifteen-sixteen, it was really bad. It hurt, it hurt a lot to be separated from my classmates on a regular basis...and you know why?

[Valerie's mother] I spent most of the evenings from about eight-thirty on trying to calm Valerie down sufficiently so that I knew she would be able to sleep at all. She was basically an insomniac. Her wide-awake point was late but on top of that the anxiety she was feeling was just overwhelming. Grade four she had a six-week assessment and was given more resource room time. It still wasn't enough though because we weren't somehow pinpointing the emotional end of it for her was the difficult thing to do that her experience here at home; her expression at home – the crying and tantrums would go on almost every evening and that wasn't being addressed by making adjustments with her resource room time.

[Valerie] One of the turning points for me was Integra and Camp Towhee. At camp, I finally realized that I was not alone. That I wasn't one of the few kids, or even the only kid in my class who had these problems and I went there two summers in a row, ninety-two and ninety-three and they were the two best summers of my life. The feeling of community there was really important and really vital to me getting a lot of stuff and also taught me social skills that I didn't necessarily know. I couldn't have verbalized this when I was a child. It was only in my twenties when I could totally verbalize, after years of therapy, what I was feeling and why. 'Lazy' and 'if she just tried harder' were the two that got me the most growing up. I heard a lot of 'if she only tried harder, if she only was just here it would be fine' because my absenteeism was extensive; I would miss up to sixty days of school a year from being sick with sinus infections and it's really discouraging to hear 'if you just tried harder' when you're already putting in a hundred and ten percent.

[Valerie's mother]: I knew she was depressed from the age of nine on, but how do you prove that with a child of that age?

[Valerie]: Growing up and being depressed, undiagnosed for so long, it had a major impact on my life. It stopped me from doing a lot of things. I would've never thought I would get this far if you'd asked me when I was, you know, fifteen sixteen if I would graduate high school an Ontario scholar and the art student of the year, if you had asked me that I would've said you're crazy. If you'd asked me if I had applied for university and actually gotten in with a partial extant scholarship I would've said you're nuts. But it happened.

