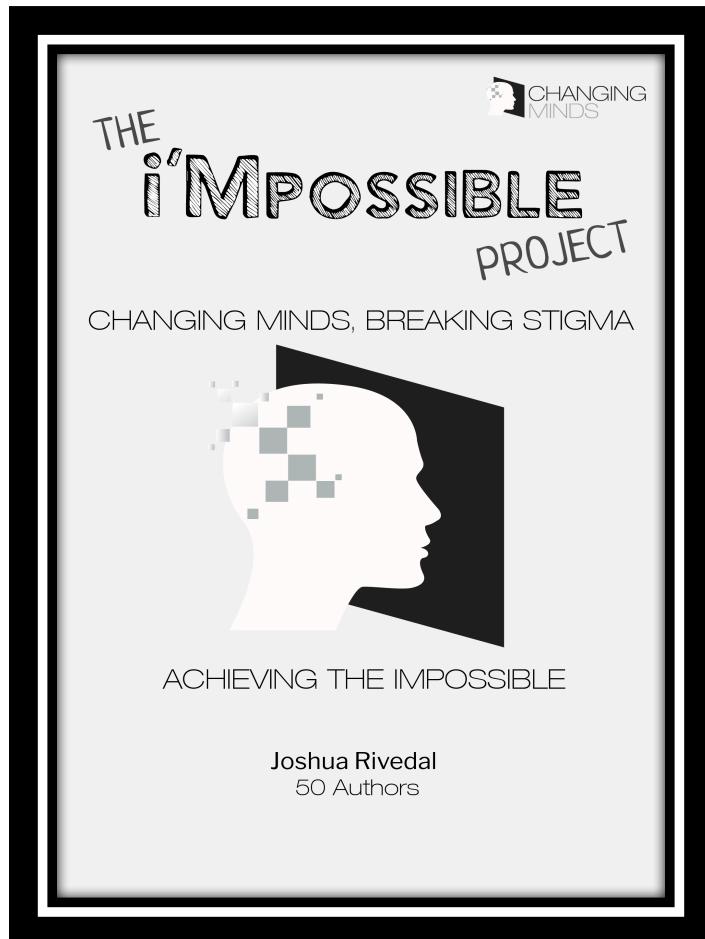


Changing Minds, Breaking Stigma, Achieving the Impossible

Pre-Order Sample Chapters



For release June 22, 2017

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**Skookum Hill
Beverly Hills, California**

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Flipping the Script on “Impossible”

FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER, I've been dealing with a nagging health condition—something that until age twenty-seven (only six years ago) I didn't even have words to describe.

As a kid, I would often go through bouts of extreme sadness for seemingly no reason at all. Sometimes my sadness would interfere with schoolwork, good friendships, and my self-esteem. As a teen, I figured out how to tolerate it but never learned how to manage it. As an adult, I went through the same bouts of extreme sadness but instead of them happening once a year, it began to ramp up to twice a year. At age twenty-seven one bout of sadness left me suicidal and searching for answers. While recovering, I got into therapy and did loads of research and found out what was causing my sadness: depression.

Just before age twenty-eight, I began to learn to manage my depression, and then started speaking openly all over the world about my battles with depression and suicide because I didn't want one more person to experience the pain and suffering I once had.

While on my travels, I met thousands of people who had their own powerful stories of hope, healing, and overcoming life's ob-

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stacles. Many of these people wanted to tell their story to help others, much like I was doing. This is where the first edition of The i'Mpossible Project was born. *Reengaging with Life, Creating a New You* was the subtitle and it featured stories from people with mental health conditions, trauma, suicide loss, families, and disabilities. January, 2016 the book was published and started strong out of the gate—and readers were asking for a second edition of The i'Mpossible Project.

So, we listened. This second edition is all on people living with mental health conditions, how they've found a way to manage, and what they do to live a happy, healthy, and fulfilling life. Showing people how ordinary people have accomplished extraordinary feats in their personal and professional lives, making the impossible, possible, and changing the world.

Why? After working for more than five years in the field of mental health, and while managing my own ongoing depression, I realized—we as a society don't speak openly enough about our own mental health. We talk sports, dieting, sex, work, and how gluten-free muffins are better than the regular kind—but we don't talk nearly enough about our mental health. And I'm not just talking about someone being depressed, bipolar disorder, anxiety, or any other "disorder." I'm talking the good parts too: therapy, yoga for relaxation, taking time off from work to rest, or binge-watching the Bachelorette (I can't believe my wife got me hooked on this show. #facepalm).

So, then... what's up with your book's subtitle?

That is a fantastic question. I'm glad you asked.

CHANGING MINDS

This is one of my life missions, what we're working toward with our new training series on mental health, and what we're hoping to achieve with this book—to change how people think about mental health and mental illness. Me and forty nine other authors want to change people's hearts and minds with the true stories we tell. But we're not going to force it. We're going to let you come to that conclusion yourself—after all, you are pretty darn smart... at least smart enough to buy this book (my editor wouldn't let me insert a winking emoji here. Buzzkill).

BREAKING STIGMA

If I could have written “Beating the \$%^ Out of Stigma,” instead of “Breaking Stigma” I would have—but my wife advised me against it. Stigma is a killer and prevents people from speaking up, speaking out, and getting help for something treatable, something that is often a part of everyday life, something that doesn't make you less of a person but, in reality, more human. I detest stigma (also known in some cases as “prejudice,” and “discrimination”). This book and these stories are part of the daily battle being waged against the stigma surrounding mental health.

ACHIEVING THE IMPOSSIBLE

This is what The i'Mpossible Project is all about. Impossible is nothing more than a mindset. Of course, I will never sprout wings no matter how badly I want to fly. But one thing I can do is find the essence of why I want to fly and find alternative ways

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to achieve it: become a pilot, take hang gliding lessons, work on inventing a jetpack, become a flight attendant—and the list could go on. The aim of this book and the i'Mpossible book series is to show people who are working toward what many believe is impossible and yet who are achieving it anyway.

For much of recent history, mental health was only viewed by society as a conversation about “crazy.” And people living with mental health conditions were viewed as pariahs or less-than human—and living a normal, healthy, productive, and fulfilled life was impossible.

But as someone living with depression and who manages it through counseling, a support system, a pill, faith, creativity, and healthy habits—I am living a healthy, productive, and fulfilled life, and I’m flipping the metaphorical bird at archaic societal views. And so are the authors in this book.

HOW THIS BOOK IS SUPPOSED TO BE READ

Any way you want. You’re the boss. Pick it up. Put it down. Read it in order. Read it out of order. Read it to a friend. Or pass it to along to someone you care about. Some of the stories might be a difficult read, while others you’ll breeze through. Take your time with it.

Each story is a thousand words—unique, powerful, and straight to the point. All are written with love and the hope that you, the reader, will take something away that will help you through your day, your week, or the rest of your life.

This book is not written entirely by polished authors—some are and some aren’t. But I’ve lightly edited each of the stories—

not to fit my #snarky writing style, but rather to make sure each story is crystal clear.

And if you're anything like me, you've probably skimmed the last two pages thinking, "When is this guy gonna get to the point? When are we gonna get to the stories?" Hold on fellow skim-reader. We're almost there.

Ladies, gentlemen (or whatever gender you identify as #equality); I present to you: fifty incredible authors, and fifty inspirational, life-changing stories.

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The Past

Benjamin Tyler

If you could go back in time, what would you change in your life? Often I am asked this very question. Upon inquiry an inventory of memories begin flooding through my brain.

Would I erase that evening at twelve years old begging for my mother's affection, which I was denied—the point where I defined myself unlovable.

Or the dark period where I was showering with a garden hose in my dirty New Orleans apartment—a period in my life that was plagued with shame, disgusted with the man that I had become.

Maybe I should remove the time in New York City with my six-figure salary? Grinding away at soul sucking work twelve hours a day. Highlighted with frequent anxiety attacks knowing that I had a larger purpose that couldn't wait.

People always want the definitive moment—a scene that if erased, I would have never have embraced a world of drugs, alcohol, sex, porn, and gambling. And without that definitive

moment or scene, I never would have relied on these vices to fill the loneliness and lack of self-worth that consumed my life.

What people forget is that they are doing exactly what that question was asking—and what I was doing for many years—they are removing my past.

Being the youngest in a household filled with backstabbing and manipulation—I saw everything. To cope, I created four rules for life:

1. Emotions will only hurt you. Shut them off.
2. Love and admiration comes from perfection. Build a life others envy.
3. Always, always stay busy.
4. When at home get to the basement as quickly as possible. The basement is where one can be alone.

Alone was safe—an internal haven where nothing could hurt me. Connection made me disconnect. Touch made me quiver. Love was nauseating. Unfortunately, “alone” never works for the soul. So, I found comfort and connection in the things that made people define me as an “addict.”

At the core of my intentions was a continuous need to run. Keep relationships superficial. Always be switching cities and neighborhoods. When things got “real,” I got out.

The result of always running away was a chronic need to chase something down. To fill the ego with validation for what I had become, I wanted to create a mantel-place filled with trophies for everyone to see. “Look at me! See what I built all alone! I don’t need anyone!”

That was unless we were talking about the bottle. I always needed that. My Cleopatra. When she held me I could bear my

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soul to her. Tell her how alone I felt inside. How shameful and ugly my existence was.

Unlike my mother she always listened. Told me that I was beautiful and smart. That I would always be loved. All I had to do was keep coming back.

And coming back was exactly what I did. Every chance I could. While there was a voice inside telling me to loosen from her grips—I couldn't. Like Caesar, Cleopatra had seduced me to the point where I lost control.

The most powerful force in life is defending the person you believe yourself to be. For me, that was being a lone soldier. My ego thrived on this notion. My ego. The protector from two things: not feeling worthy, and not being loved.

To break free from the ego and the vices fueling it I knew where I had to go—my story. The very thing that I was desperately avoiding. The tales I told myself and allowed to define who I was for years.

So instead of running away from the story, I decided to run into it. I got present with those past events. Relived each scene multiple times to feel the pain, regret, and shame that came with them. Had the necessary conversations with its characters. Built a community that helped me find the truth when I still wanted to listen to the lies I was telling myself.

The result was a rewritten history. A story that was more truthful, more realistic, and more uplifting. I was loved. I was beautiful. I was worthy. The story that I hated more than anything I began to love. All of its moments. All of its characters.

All its pain. Who I really was and, more importantly, what I was becoming.

Through this process I was able to take control of my life. Put the power back in my hands. Life was no longer riddled with shame, but intoxicated with joy. I began walking through life not fearing who was going to hurt me, but started embracing the opportunities that come from leaning into uncertainty.

It was at that point that I could let Cleopatra go. Long before she could become the catalyst to my death. Unlike Caesar, I didn't wait too long.

And by letting her go I reclaimed life. Clarity and purpose started to fill my soul. I left that "great" job to pursue my passion of inspiring others to live bigger in their own. I left the city that attracted me for its money and women to move back to my hometown to be with family. A place I ran away from for ten years.

Snapping back to the initial question, "If you could go back in time what would you change?"

Not one thing.

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Escaping Darkness, Choosing Light

Shannon Ackerman

Two years ago, if you would have told me I would be alive today and helping change the world, I would have told you that you were crazy. Two years ago, I couldn't even see myself living to be sixteen, let alone making it to my sophomore year of high school.

At fourteen, I was moving schools and had issues with my paternal father. And I was being bullied at school, which started in elementary school and never really stopped. But it was middle school that had the biggest impact on me. I moved between three schools in three years, the last one being in Florida. The second one I attended in Colorado took the largest toll on me.

People made fun of me, a lot. I was taunted for being poor, overweight and for not being pretty enough. I had a face full of acne, I would shake a lot, and I had a hard time talking to people. I could count the few friends I had on one hand, but there was constant drama. But none of this is what tore me apart.

A few days into March, my mom had picked me up from a cheerleading tryout. In the car, the words spilled from her lips, "Shannon, Uncle John V. committed suicide the other day..."

She continued on but I couldn't hear a word she said. I felt like the floor had opened up from under my feet, swallowing me whole. My stomach dropped and I could feel my brain pounding against my skull. Tears welled up in my eyes as we pulled into the driveway of our house. I grabbed my backpack and headed downstairs into my room where I spent the rest of my night.

My uncle John V. wasn't a blood relative but I had known him since I was born. We'd watch football together and bond over our dislike of the Dallas Cowboys. He was sarcastic towards me, but was sweet to me and I looked up to him. The week he died was the first time I had grabbed a blade and dragged it across my wrist.

My life took a turn. I became isolated from my parents and I'd constantly get into arguments with my mom. I spent the majority of my time in my room and I stopped eating. I would not come out of the house and the only people I surrounded myself with were those who were a toxic part of my life.

The toxic people, I would somehow call 'friends' kept telling me that I should "cut a little deeper" or "it should have been you instead" and for a while, I wished it were. I wanted to be dead.

We moved to Florida around eighth grade and I met some amazing friends, some of my best friends to this day, but even then, I still had an eating disorder and I was still self-harming. And finally, I got tired of people seeing them so I took a blade to my thighs, which left countless of scars.

Though my friends tried to help, they had a hard time understanding and this carried on into my freshmen year of high school in Kentucky.

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January 31st, 2015, I decided to recover and talk to my parents. I soon started going to my doctor and they recommended seeing a therapist. My therapist impacted my life so much, and we learned about two things that were controlling my life: anxiety and depression.

Throughout my newfound recovery, different medications have messed me up a bit and I have had a few relapses but I am better than I have ever been. And I owe that to my parents, my teachers, my friends, and my family.

Now, as a senior in high school, I am an active volunteer with the Matthew Silverman Memorial Foundation and have created a close bond with the foundation's executive director who will never know how much she has impacted my life. I received the foundation's Matt's Hero Award, which I will forever cherish.

The greatest thing I have learned throughout my journey is that I will be okay... and so will you. I cannot promise happiness, but I can promise that you will be okay. You have a choice, you can let people put a label on you and become that, or you can use your words, and you can move toward something greater than you can ever imagine.

There is good in the world, and good people, and the world is more kind than what it's made out to be.

We have a choice to be the light in the world, or we can stay hidden in the darkness. Tragedies can occur everywhere, even in our own lives. But please do not give up on the world, on other people, and especially not yourself.

Life After the Ward

Imade Nibokun

The only thing I'm more afraid of than a depression meltdown is a depression lockdown. There are people who feel safe and supported when they were hospitalized, but I'm not one of them. When I was released from a secluded mental hospital that was hours away from every person who ever loved me, I thought the darkest moments of my life were over. No doctor would threaten me with drug injection or harsh medicine that made me balloon in weight. No nurse could look on me in condescension as if my illness deserves the punishment of a chaotic ward with yelling and physical threats lasting from the day long into the night.

When I stepped into the sun for only the second time in two weeks, I thought my trauma was over. My best friend, who flew from North Carolina and visited me every day, threw Frisbees on the immaculate lawn of my greatest nightmare to reclaim the joy that was stolen from us.

No one really tells you what life is like after the ward. You're given suicide prevention plans and a connection with a local outpatient center. But no one told me how I could hardly sleep after spending nights with antagonistic roommates and fearing

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sexual assault from that creepy guy who tried to enter other people's rooms.

I felt that I had just left a war, but my outpatient therapy was nothing more than a group conversation about boring topics like lawn care and cats. My mind was still thinking about the disabled crack addict who took off all her clothes to protest being stuck in a mental hospital because she was homeless. My heart was with all the people who didn't get visitors or homemade meals. You leave the ward but in many ways, the ward doesn't leave you.

To this day, I'm scared to call a crisis line because they may come to my house and take me away. I'm frightened to tell people that I'm thinking self-harming thoughts because I may lose my job. These fears aren't always based in reality. Most crisis lines don't ask for your home address. And most friends won't tell my personal issues to my boss. But that fear of going back is there. Every day of my life.

Finding therapists who don't immediately dismiss your mental healthcare trauma are hard to find. Many of them are socialized to defend their profession. Finding people who know what the inside is like, long after visiting hours, is like searching for keys in the dark. Who wants to say they were in a mental hospital when that place is used as a source of shame and comedy in popular culture?

But when you do find that therapist, and when you do find that person with shared scars, the moment is so much sweeter. The ward gives you appreciation for all the things you take for granted. The ability to see the sun, to shave, to eat what you

want when you want, takes on a whole new meaning. My sense of injustice was deepened. I know the pain that is inflicted against mentally ill people. I know that despite my depression diagnosis, I lived with psychotic people and felt a small dose of the anguish they feel. My advocacy is not just for educated people with degrees, but for that crack addict, who hoped her exposed skin would lead to someone truly seeing her.

Life after the ward comes with a responsibility. You see further and deeper than most people. The ward can take away, but it can also enable you to give back.

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Author Biographies

In Order of Appearance

Benjamin Tyler is a transformational speaker and creator of Unleash Yourself—a program that has changed the lives of people across the world to stand in their potential. He believes that the path to living a fulfilled life is found through the meaning you derive from the work you do, relationships you build with others, and the relationship with one's self. You can learn more about Benjamin and his work by heading over to Benjamin-Tyler.com.

Shannon Ackerman is a high school senior from Kentucky. She is a proud advocate for mental health and volunteers her time with the Matthew Silverman Memorial Foundation.

Imade Nibokun is a Columbia Non-Fiction MFA graduate who turned her Depressed While Black thesis into an in-progress book and online platform that shares mental health stories from an African-American lens. She writes about depression at the intersection of race, romance, and religion. Imade is also a freelance writer with published work in LA Weekly, VICE, Atlanta Journal Constitution, and WNYC.

Joshua Rivedal is the founder and creative director of The i'Mpossible Project. He is an author, curriculum designer in mental health and suicide prevention, playwright, and an international public speaker. He has spoken about suicide prevention, mental health awareness, storytelling, and diversity in more than two hundred locations on three continents. He has previously served on the board of directors for the New York City chapter of The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Joshua currently serves on the advisory board of Docz, a startup peer-to-peer mental health app. He wrote and developed the one-man play, *Kicking My Blue Genes in The Butt* (KMBB), which is paired with suicide prevention education and has toured extensively throughout North America and the U.K. His newest venture is a mental health based curriculum, “Changing Minds,” which combines lecture, group discussion, storytelling, and improv theatre. He lives in Los Angeles with his wife, children, and several cats, turtles, and a dog.



The i'Mpossible Project is an organization designed to entertain, educate, and engage on suicide prevention, mental health, diversity, storytelling and social justice.

About the Book

It's finally ready.

I am excited to share that the second iMpossible Project book: *Changing Minds, Breaking Stigma, Achieving the Impossible* (January 19, 2017) is available for pre-order... today. Like, right now (#word). At all the major outlets where books are sold (click the links):

Go to www.iampossibleproject.com/preorder to order an auto-graphed paperback or an e-book at Barnes & Noble, iBooks (Apple), and Kindle (as of April 11).

I'll be honest: This is pretty big. I've been curating this book for more than two years—fiddling with the right combination of stories, authors, and concepts. If you've followed along on the blog then you know the truth already: I put my everything into this book. Absolutely everything. And you're getting a little of me and fifty incredible authors and stories when you get this book. It was exhausting and wonderful and a once-in-a-lifetime process to produce this book and I am just now getting the confirmation I hoped for: *It was all so incredibly worth it. Thank you for that.*

So Here's the Nitty McGritty

Pre-order sales matter a ton. They show booksellers and publishers that there is interest in what I and these 50 authors have

written. It would mean the world to me and to these authors if you would [preorder a copy](#)

As a thank-you for pre-ordering, the first 200 people to pre-order will get a “thank you” in the book—forever, in the front where everyone can see.

Not satisfied with a “thank you” in the book? I’ll also send you a free download of my first book *The Gospel According to Josh: A 28-Year Gentile Bar Mitzvah*, as well as the first book in the i’Mpossible series: *Reengaging With Life, Creating a New You*.

#hollyguacamole ... that's some good readin'

All you have to do is send in a proof of purchase—a scanned receipt, a screenshot, a selfie with your receipt—to tony@skookumhill.com

You have no idea how much the fifty authors and I have been encouraged by your comments, your tweets, your emails, and letters. Thank you for inspiring me, and us, to keep pushing forward with this book. I’m so grateful to have you in this community and I don’t know if I say it nearly enough. Thank you... and thank you for helping make this “i’Mpossible” book, possible.

[Click here to preorder an autographed paperback copy or an ebook copy](#)

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ALSO BY JOSHUA RIVEDAL

*The Gospel According to Josh:
A 28-Year Gentile Bar Mitzvah
(Based on the one-man show
Kicking My Blue Genes in the Butt)*

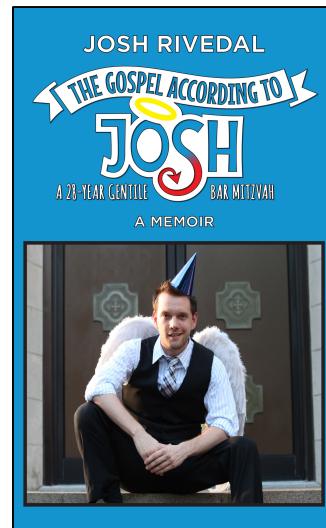
By the time Joshua Rivedal turned twenty-five, he thought he'd have the perfect life—a few years singing on Broadway, followed by a starring role in his own television show. After which, his getaway home in the Hamptons would be featured in Better Homes & Gardens, and his face would grace the cover of the National Enquirer as Bigfoot's not-so-secret lover.

Instead, his resume is filled with an assortment of minor league theatre and an appearance on The Maury Povich Show—a career sidetracked by his father's suicide, a lawsuit from his mother over his inheritance, and a break-up with his long-term girlfriend.

Tortured by his thoughts, he finds himself on the ledge of a fourth-floor window, contemplating jumping out to inherit his familial legacy. In turn he must reach out to the only person who can help before it's too late.

Available on Amazon, Kindle, B&N.com. and at
www.iampossibleproject.com/the-gospel-according-to-josh

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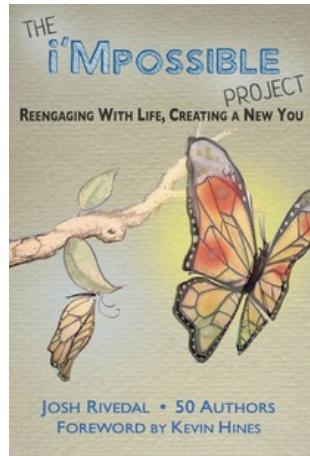
Josh Rivedal & 50 authors

The i'Mpossible Project: Volume I

Reengaging with Life, Creating a New You

Storytelling is one of our oldest traditions. Stories can make us laugh or cry... or both at the same time. They can teach, inspire and even ignite an entire movement.

The i'Mpossible Project is a collection of powerful stories. They're gritty, deep, heartwarming... and guaranteed to help you discover new possibilities in your life.



These stories are all about overcoming obstacles, reengaging with life, and creating new possibilities—a son's homicide, a transgender man finding love, coming back from the brink of suicide, finding your funny in the face of overwhelming odds, and more...

If you're ready to create new possibilities in your life, you need to read this book!

Available on Amazon, Kindle, B&N.com. and at
www.iampossibleproject.com/one



A Mental Health Based Curriculum

Changing Minds is an evidence based curriculum that combines lecture, storytelling, group discussion, and improv theatre to enhance emotional development—providing hope, help, and life-saving skills. Changing Minds is available for grades K-12, college, CEUs, and professional development.

There are five (5), sixty (60) minute modules:

- The Basics of Mental Health
- Developing Coping Skills
- Storytelling and Support Systems
- Living with/Supporting a Person with a Mental Health Condition
- Helping Yourself or a Friend in Suicidal Crisis

Five more modules are being developed on: Diversity, Emotional Intelligence, Anti-Bullying, and Substance Abuse.

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