

The Opportunity of Adversity

Profile

Name (alias): Laura

Age: 22

Gender: Female

Nationality: Australian with Cuban heritage

Interests/ Hobbies: Art (sketching), reading and listening to music.

Background: Laura was born at the xxxx Hospital in October 1989. She grew up and currently resides in the xxxx District. Laura went to school at the xxxx School and finished year 12 in 2007. For the past five years Laura has been working in a few different jobs including as an assistant in a law firm in Parramatta. As of this year she is studying communications and media at xxxx University. Laura is the youngest of three children having two siblings (an older brother and sister). She also has Cuban heritage on her mother's side.

A detailed profile describing Laura's background, characteristics and the nature of her illness

Characteristics and qualities:

Laura is a very positive person with an optimistic outlook on life. She is quite resilient and nothing seems to faze her. Laura is an intelligent, bubbly person who everyone enjoys being around. I have known her all my life and consider her an excellent role model. Laura is a kind, lovely, positive person who is able to overcome problems she encounters as a result of her determination.

Adversity/ Medical Condition:

The adversity Laura has faced includes two medical problems. Laura was diagnosed with transposition of the great arteries (heart condition) shortly after birth. She also has a few different spinal problems including a severe case of scoliosis which has affected her life.

Analysis

Introduction to Adversity:

Medical Condition:

Laura was diagnosed with two medical conditions at birth; transposition of the great arteries and scoliosis.

Transposition of the great arteries refers to a congenital heart defect where the two major arteries leaving the heart are

Connected to the wrong ventricles (the two lower chambers of the heart). This results in an insufficient amount of oxygen being pumped around the body. Laura was born with complete transposition. The cause of her congenital heart condition is unknown. Although she had open heart surgery to fix the arteries, Laura has been dealing with the impacts of this condition all her life.

A very perceptive and comprehensive account of Laura's adversities

Scoliosis is an abnormal, sideways curve of the spine which makes the spine look lopsided. This spinal condition can cause the head not to be centered, one shoulder to be higher than the other, one hip to look more prominent and an obvious curvature in the spine. The cause of scoliosis is also unknown. Laura has a severe case of scoliosis. Scoliosis changed the way her spine grew through infancy and adolescence.

Impacts:

Physical impacts:

Scoliosis has had many physical impacts on Laura throughout her life. Her symptoms include; constant back pain from spine curvature, hiccups caused by the compression of her diaphragm, restrictions in many areas of her life including sport, high risk of chest infections and inability to sit in one place for a long period of time due to increased pain.

Social and Emotional Impacts:

Laura's medical conditions have restricted her from doing certain activities and sports. Laura isn't allowed to jump on a trampoline, do gymnastics, participate in cross country, do much swimming (particularly backstroke), lift heavy objects or participate in certain team sports. These restrictions all have social and emotional impacts. As a result of her condition Laura couldn't socialise with people through some sports and she was forced to sit out of various PE classes throughout high school. Emotionally, Laura remains an optimistic person but every once in a while she becomes upset, saddened and concerned by her inability to participate in some social activities. Laura hasn't had the opportunity to have every experience she wanted to throughout her life.

Managing:**Treatment:**

Laura has gone through various treatments for both of her conditions. Over the last twenty two years, Laura has worn six back braces and had two spinal surgeries to try and correct her spinal curvature. She wore the majority of her back braces everyday throughout her adolescence. While the operations and braces couldn't permanently fix her back, Laura's spine has benefited from the treatments.

Extensive description of the management and support mechanisms available to Laura

When Laura was a baby she had an open-heart surgery procedure called 'arterial switch operation' to switch her arteries to their proper places. This procedure involved temporarily stopping her heart. The operation was a complete success but Laura still needs to see a cardiologist every few years to check that her heart is functioning healthily. As sickness is a major concern, Laura has to take strong antibiotics, if any signs of an infection appear. She also has to take antibiotics before she goes to the dentist. Laura has to clean any bleeding wounds with antiseptic.

Support from People and Organisations:

Laura has received strong support from her family and friends. Her parents and siblings have all made sacrifices and helped her through her medical conditions. Laura's mum was a very big influence during her adolescent years helping her deal with the physical, social and emotional impacts of adversity.

While Laura hasn't sought help from any particular organisations she did receive strong support from her school during her high school years. The school allowed her to be exempt from participating in certain PE classes and gave her other activities to partake in during those times such as helping with younger classes. Another important service that the school provided was allowing Laura to complete her HSC under special provisions. Laura was allowed to go for a walk or take a break from the exam at any point. These special provisions were made because of Laura's scoliosis (she couldn't sit still for a long period of time without feeling pain and she had constant hiccups). All the services the school provided were very positive and helped Laura immensely.

Strategies and Coping Mechanisms:

Laura uses different coping mechanisms such as reading novels, listening to music, watching her favourite TV shows/ movies and sketching to deal with her medical conditions. Every now and then Laura gets upset so she does something enjoyable to counter any sad feelings she might be experiencing. Laura is particularly interested in art and often draws to express her feelings when she is experiencing anxiety or feeling depressed.

Demonstrates an extensive understanding of the strategies Laura used

Effectiveness/ Success:

I think that reading, listening to music and watching TV are all great ways to take her mind off her medical conditions. They offer a release from stress and anxiety and help lift her spirits up. I also think sketching is a great way for her to express her feelings. While I believe that all these activities are successful coping mechanisms, I also think she should tell her family and her peers how she feels rather than just hide her feelings.

Future:**Approach to Life Challenges:**

Laura approaches life challenges differently to most people. After going through adversity she now has strong will power, determination and a high level of resilience. Her medical conditions have allowed her to see problems as less hard, worrying or difficult. For example completing the HSC and getting into a good university didn't seem so stressful after everything she went through. Laura isn't afraid of challenges. Her family and peers have also influenced the way she approaches life challenges. Laura accepts her medical condition and still tries to make the most out of every situation and opportunity.

Displays a broad understanding of Laura's challenges and how she approaches them

Other support:

Other support services she could use include:

- Councillor
- Visiting scoliosis support websites such as 'the Scoliosis Association Australia'
- Talking to other people who have the same medical condition
- Regular visits to the doctor

Clearly identifies the support services and people Laura can access about her medical condition

Reflection

Impact of Interview:

The interview with Laura had a large impact on me as I also have a spinal condition. In 2009 I was diagnosed with a mild case of Scheuermann's disease. Scheuermann's disease is very similar to scoliosis only the spinal curvature is slightly different. Scoliosis causes the spine to look more lopsided whereas Scheuermann's causes the spine to look more rounded (increased kyphosis). My spinal curvature is only minor whereas Laura's is severe. It was interesting learning more about a medical condition I could relate to. I was quite shocked at the severity of the physical impacts of scoliosis and how it affected Laura. I was also very impressed with Laura's coping techniques and strategies. After conducting the interview I realised just how much some people have to deal with in their lives and how a horrible experience can be an opportunity to learn resilience. I've known Laura my entire life and always seen her as a role model. Even after everything she has been through Laura is still one of the kindest, most vivacious, strong-willed girls I have ever met. I'm amazed at her ability to persevere and not let anything stop her. This interview just increased my understanding of her ability to overcome adversity.

A meaningful reflection that displays strong empathy for Laura's condition and the student's own

Implementing Strategies:

There are many different ways I can implement some of the coping mechanisms and strategies she uses when facing everyday hardships in life. A few of Laura's coping mechanisms included reading novels, listening to music, watching her favourite TV shows/ movies and sketching when she is feeling upset. I have tried doing the majority of these activities when I'm feeling troubled and they have really helped me feel more relaxed and taken my mind off a problem. Reading a good novel or watching a TV show helps to clear your mind and allows you to forget about the problems you are facing. I think expressing my feelings through sketching is a good idea as well because I thoroughly enjoy art. Another way which I express how I feel is through music and composition which is linked to expression through art.

An in depth analysis of the strategies Laura has implemented to overcome her adversities, how Pat can incorporate similar strategies and how this will affect their own life

I also want to implement some of the strategies Laura uses to emotionally overcome problems into my life. Laura is very determined and doesn't let anything faze her. Despite her medical condition she is still willing to try anything and everything. Sometimes I am quite anxious and sensitive over

small problems. I want to build up my resistance and be able to shrug off and overcome adversity just like Laura. I want to have a more positive and optimistic mind frame in difficult situations. Laura is also quite confident and sure of her beliefs. If I can implement just a few of the qualities she possesses or strategies she uses into my life, I will find it easier to overcome small problems in the future and begin to build up resistance to adversity. Overcoming adversity starts with a positive, optimistic mind frame

References (Please note these links have not been verified and may not work)

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Grade Commentary

Pat has demonstrated an excellent understanding of Laura's adversities, circumstances, support and coping mechanisms. There is a strong analysis throughout the response demonstrating extensive knowledge of Laura's adversities. Pat's meaningful reflection shows a strong empathy to Laura. This work sample demonstrates characteristics of work typically produced by a student performing at a grade A standard.