

September 2014

My dear friend,

Mimi has been through a lot during her short life. But we are confident now that she seems to have got things back on track and the future is looking brighter.

She is 20 years old now. Her father and mother divorced when she was very young and she says that she doesn't even know where her father is living. In addition to her mother at home, she has an elder brother and sister – that is if we can call it “home”.

When she was in Primary Six, her mother began threatening her with a chopper whenever Mimi did not do what she wanted. In Form One, threats became action and on several occasions her mother actually slashed her in a rage. As a result of this Mimi was put in a Children's Home for three years. Although this meant that she was safe for three years, since very little seems to have been done about the family situation and resolving the fear that Mimi had felt when her own mother attacked her with a chopper, when she got home again the problems only got worse.

As we got to know Mimi better, it became clear that she hated her mother and used every occasion to get some kind of revenge. She began stealing things from home, like her brother's smart phone and selling them to her classmates. Then she began to take her mother's credit card and buy things. It wasn't that she herself wanted these things. In the end she sold all the things she bought to her classmates. On one occasion, she even went so far as to use her mother's credit card as surety on a loan from a finance company. She was just trying to inflict pain on her mother and get some kind of revenge.

As things began to escalate the police became involved and she spent some time in a remand home under a Care and Protection Order. This does not seem to have helped her very much, since when she got out she simply carried on as before. This time, she was taken to court and sentenced to a period of probation. And so she came to Youth Outreach.

In the beginning she had obvious difficulties in settling down. She did not know how to relate to people either the staff or the other girls. She avoided the staff whenever she could and tried to form relationships with the other girls by lending them money or bullying them. On one or two occasions went back to her old habit of stealing.

At that time, she was still on remand and was waiting for her court appearance. Her family were outraged at her behavior and their own loss of face and so they never visited. Mimi had just begun a new job in a convenience store and the demands of going to work on time and coping with the customers put her under even more pressure.

When our social workers tried to get her to open up, she retreated further and would sit on her bed talking to her teddy bear. Sometimes she would even talk to the staff in what can only be described as “baby language.” There was obviously much going on inside her that we would have to gradually coax out of her before we could get her back on track.

Once the court case was settled and she was formally on probation she began to settle down. She had got used to Youth Outreach, the demands of her job were no longer new and

gradually we began to see the real Mimi. She was in fact quite a nice, quiet girl. She was intelligent and sensitive but she was afraid of everything and everyone. She seemed to think that since even her own mother didn't like her she couldn't be worth very much. But slowly everything began to pour out – the tears, the anger, the frustration.

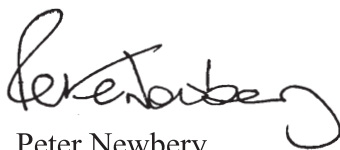
Anybody coming to Youth Outreach can hardly miss the facilities for Adventure Based Counseling (ABC), after all they go from the ground floor all the way up to the roof on the 16/F. And you would have to be deaf not to hear the shouts and laughter of the young people who come to join the programs. From her bed in the girls' center Mimi could see and hear all these things and she seemed to be fascinated by what was going on.

For some time, the ABC staff had been running a program called "Your Ideal Job" which aims at building up the self-confidence of the young people while helping them to improve their interpersonal and communication skills. This in turn will help them in their job search. The social workers asked Mimi if she would like to join this program. This meant that she would have to give up her present job but she decided to give it a go. It would be nice to say that she did it with a smile, but she didn't! She was obviously quite anxious but interested.

She completed the course. Although not the best student, she learnt a lot. In fact she learnt so much that she has now decided to go back to school, to take a post-secondary diploma and hopefully go on to take an Associate Degree. We have every confidence that she has the ability to achieve these goals.

Mimi has gone home and we are still visiting. She is doing well. Now the goal is to try to change the perceptions of her mother and her siblings so that they too can see that she has changed. This is by no means the end of the road but at least we can see the sunshine through the clouds. Keep Mimi close to your heart. She still has a long way to go.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Newbery". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Peter Newbery
Executive Director