

## HOPE

By Cindy Hernandez, High School Senior

You know that pain that lingers in your body? When the time is just perfect its intensity increases. Bloodshot eyes, stuffy nose, heavy chest. the body breathes in...out... it speeds up as the mind wanders, faster, and faster it goes, soon, you can barely keep up. This pain that had inconspicuously taken possession of my thoughts and emotions. I was drifting away—away from reality. I wasn't in control anymore.

Please sit down and join me for the ride. 2017 and I am a Sophomore in high school. I was always a bright kid growing up; however, high school had brought along a trail of hardships. Hit after hit my grades were dropping, my relationships were deteriorating, and I was falling apart. I was focusing on all the negative aspects of my life. I got to a point where I was angry at the world for being against me, and angry at myself for being vulnerable. I woke up every morning with the same prayer "please be a better day"; however, everyday consisted of the same things, busy hardworking parents, oblivious peers, and a war in my head which I was ironically losing.

Someone somewhere once said "tomorrow shall be a new day" meaning another chance for joy to come in, slay the dragon, and save the princess. Well... In this story the fairytale ran short.

It was late February...2 a.m., my ear is pressed against my phone trying to teleport to the other side, my breath heavy running faster than my feet. My mind seemed like a jigsaw puzzle as I desperately tried putting words together attempting to convince him of the beautiful reasons to love life, speaking to him words I, myself didn't believe. As I kept sobbing and pleading, I heard silence on the other line. At that moment I fell to my knees. The pain of my broken heart had numbed the pain of the rough pavement digging into my flesh. A million questions ran through my head, this was the very last thing I needed. My body was hot as my heart seemed to have died alongside him. The person who I grew up with, the friend who would continuously ask how I was doing. We had shared many moments of tears and laughter. Now I was left alone, and empty, having to fend for myself.

After that day nothing felt the same. My body was suffering from sleep deprivation, and all I wanted to do was be alone. One day as I was trapped in my sorrows a teacher came up to me asking if everything was okay, I quickly said yes because the last thing I wanted was to draw attention to myself; however, she was convinced something was

wrong and she said “you come to my class every morning, you hear the lessons all the time, maybe one of them will hit home.” She proceeded by walking away leaving me to think. I seemed to have had a flash back to all the S.E.L lessons that had been taught to me and she was right! The fixed and growth mindset lesson had come to the rescue, giving me hope that my life is what I make out of it and my days are what I let them be. I had regained a sense of control over my emotions as I soon realized that although my circumstance might not change, my outlook towards them can, and that will make a great difference. From that day forward I was motivated to get better and use all my negative experiences as learning blocks. I sought help and soon my grades were back up.

I started to be more involved in school and surround myself with healthy relationships. I was finally in a healthier state of mind.

I had grown so fond of the School Connect lessons since they were a ray of sunlight that brought me out of the dark place, I had trapped myself in. I continued teaching the lessons to freshmen when I was a junior, and now as a senior I am honored to say I have spoken in conferences advocating the importance of S.E.L. to people of all ages. I'm glad to say I am contributing to the program that helped me abundantly. Now as my high school career comes to an end I hope to attend the University of Nevada and major in International business with the hopes of one day owning a self-sustained restaurant; with this in mind I will need good emotional management skills so my emotions don't interfere with business decision making; however, S.E.L couldn't have done a better job preparing me for my future. The Social Emotional Lessons are the hope for those that feel hopeless.