

Newsletter

JANUARY 2018

DONATE

Hello!

Happy New Year! Let me thank you for all the beautiful wishes and the generous gifts sent to Inner Strength Foundation. I was so moved by the enthusiasm and collaborative spirit. So many of you shared articles and news about exciting work with teens that draws from the deep well of contemplative practice.

I'd like to tell you a story that is current in my experience before I go on with the news and updates, I just have to share how rewarding this work can be.

Warmly,

Amy Edelstein
Executive Director

Diamonds in the Rough

Reflections on potential

During the fall I piloted the program in a new school. It is a turnaround school, one that had been on the persistently failing, persistently dangerous list for many years. Over the last few school years, a very dedicated staff and principal have been pouring their hearts into turning the school around. It's working... and still it takes a lot of time for real lives to blossom.

These kids are facing so many challenging issues at home, in their neighborhoods, and with their extended families. Tough issues—weekly financial shortfall in home budgets, grandparents and cousins in weather devastated areas who'd lost everything to extreme climate events, altercations at school, trouble with authorities, court hearings, and even gang violence.

Martin was one of the students in the Inner Strength Program. He had a small compact frame, tightly wound as if he could spring into flight at any moment. As a rule, he didn't say much and mostly looked down at his shoes when he talked. Sometimes he'd show up to class with a black eye.

Martin was one of the deepest meditators I've come across in the classrooms. When he closed his eyes and sat still, his face took on a shine that comes from inner release. He had learned some basic mindfulness practices in an anger management program he'd been sent to. Rather than resenting the practice and rebelling against it, it struck a chord.

He loved the class. As the weeks went on, before and after class he'd share a little bit about himself. Not much but a little. Martin loved math, especially precalculus and wants to go on to higher mathematics. His calculus teacher had been shifted to another school due to some School District leveling, which requires a certain minimum number of students per class. It was a big disappointment and he was thrown back into a geometry program, a type of spatial relations math he just didn't have aptitude for. Problems at home and frustration at school started taking the forefront of his world.

I saw Martin less and less regularly. When he did come, his arms would be marked up with self tattoos, applied with an indelible black Sharpie. "TRUST NO ONE" they would say.

"Why'd you draw on your cheek?" I asked.

"I was bored..."

I could see him spiraling into a morass of aimlessness and resignation. I started to work with him individually. A few special instructions here and there and then I'd leave him on his own. I could see, in



UPCOMING EVENTS

Teen Mindfulness Teacher
Training part 1:

FUNDAMENTALS OF MINDFULNESS

8-week online training
February 6 - March 22

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Teen Mindfulness Teacher
Training part 2:

DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE

3 day in-person + 4 teleseminars
June 26 - July 24

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Special Women's Retreat:

AWAKEN YOUR PASSION, NOURISH YOUR SOUL

April 6-8, 2018
Mosswood Hollow Center
Seattle, WA

[REGISTER HERE](#)

spite of his current mindset, he has the potential to be a true mentor to others in the future. If Martin can attach his passions to something positive, learn how to rise above inner frustration, and make it through this adolescent stage, his accomplishments could benefit kids just like him.

Many of the issues that trigger Martin make sense. They are hard or unfair. In part, he is angry because he cares. But 15-year old boy with so much testosterone in his body and not enough guidance in his life walks a precarious line. Frustration can explode and squander his intelligence, aptitude, and interest. When I look at Martin, I see potential and a gift in the raw. Inner Strength has the capacity to turn that potential into actuality. With time, and hard work.

I asked Martin if he wanted to be a mindfulness leader. He looked at me trying to figure out if I was making fun of him. I told him I was serious. I showed him Noah Levine's website and told him the story of how Noah went from a life of rebellion to his current work as a mindfulness teacher for youth at risk. He took one look at a photo of Noah's tattooed hands and leaned in. Then I described what I was thinking. I told Martin he'd have to work hard, and I offered to work with him so over time he could have something to give.

We made a plan for the time over Christmas break: when he would practice, for how long, and a list of online resources. We made a plan for Martin to continue his precalc studies and work to become an engineer using resources from the Khan Academy, a free online learning center funded by Microsoft.

Martin and I have two and a half more years to work together. I'll see him next week when I go back to check in at the school before our program starts for the Spring.

The support people like you have given to Inner Strength is making it possible to let diamonds in the rough shine. Thank you.

[SUPPORT KIDS LIKE MARTIN WITH A QUICK PAYPAL GIFT HERE](#)

10 Top Accomplishments of 2017

Thank you for all your encouragement & support. In 2017, we:

1. Raised 100% more funds in 6 months than we did in the previous 12 months!
2. Increased the number of students served by 700!
3. Hired the most incredible Administrative Associate and are already seeing the benefits in number of grant applications we are applying for and classrooms we can serve!
4. Developed a new Inner Strength Professional Development Program for school staff and educators.
5. Expanded the Inner Strength teen mindfulness Teacher Training.
6. Received favorable results in self-compassion and self-regulation from external research study.
7. Advanced to the last rung of CASEL certification review, waiting to hear announcements for this prestigious qualification.
8. Featured in the cover story for The Notebook's issue on mental and behavioral health.
9. Had our program highlighted in the new book The Conscious Classroom.
10. Added 50% more supporters to our friends and donors. Woohoo!

4 Top Plans for 2018

Staffing a ReSet Room in 2 Schools & Training Teen Leaders. Two of our schools have created special rooms where students can go on their own to reset or practice some mindfulness when they need some quiet, recalibration, or just want to explore mindful awareness. We will be conducting session weekly and we'll be working with teen leaders so they can guide their peers. What a great step forward and big kudos to the principals, counselors and teachers who made it happen.

Serving 68 Classrooms This Year! We exceeded our goal! Our intention was to work in 55 classrooms this year. Ooops . . . my math seems to be a little rusty. Our goal has stretched, thanks to the support we've received. That means by June almost 1900 students will have completed an Inner Strength mindfulness and systemic thinking program this academic year (an increase of 700 students from last academic year). Wow!!!!

Collaborating. This Spring we will be focused on working with some of the larger youth service providers in the city so we can deepen and amplify our service to youth. This Spring we will be deepening our relationships with some of the larger youth service providers in the city so we can amplify our services to youth. Ask us about Inner Strength partnership opportunities. Ask about Inner Strength partnership opportunities.

Secondary Trauma and Support for Educators & Mental Health Providers. School teachers, staff, and mental health providers are benefitting from the Inner Strength program for selfcare and stress management. We are helping schools and nonprofits build a culture of mindful self compassion, balance, and collaborative support. There are so many people doing heroes work, nice to see their own burdens lighten a little.



UPCOMING EVENTS

New! Meditation Intensive:

THE WONDER OF MINDFULNESS: TRAINING FOR A BETTER LIFE

April 21-22, 2018
Pendle Hill Retreat Center,
Philadelphia

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Programs for Educators:

STAFF TRAINING, SELF-CARE, APPLYING TRAUMA-INFORMED MINDFULNESS

Philadelphia

[INQUIRE HERE](#)

Virtual

MORNING VIRTUAL MEDITATION WITH AMY EDELSTEIN

30 minutes - Mon-Fri, 8AM EST
Using Zoom video conferencing

[REGISTER HERE](#)

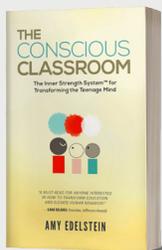
New book:

THE CONSCIOUS CLASSROOM

"A must-read for anyone interested in how to transform education!"

—Sam Beard, Jefferson Awards.

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