

# A LESSON IN EMPOWERMENT

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“When I was in grade 11, I had a big falling-out with my family and ended up moving out. After I left my family home, I felt really overwhelmed by having to manage school and life. Just getting to school was a challenge on its own, even without the homework. And there was a lot of homework, because I was in advanced placement classes. I was falling behind. I would get the bare minimum done and I missed so many assignments. My attendance record was bad.

Then I connected with a United Way high school completion program and the staff really motivated me to want to be there. They were people I needed to be accountable to. I knew that if I didn't come to school and my marks started falling, or if they thought I wasn't going to graduate, they'd notice: 'Hey, what's going on? Why aren't you getting things done? We know you can do this.'

## I want to be a role model for my two younger brothers.

I want to give them hope and make them believe that, even if things seem a little challenging now, they can graduate. With the help of people who can give them a safe space to work on their homework and the guidance that they need to understand their schoolwork, they can follow their dreams. They can graduate and go as far as they want to.

And I want young women to understand that, as scary as life may be and as many obstacles as we face, if they really believe they can succeed and they have the resources around them to make success possible, there's no way they're going to fail.

I've had to take a complete detour, and I've had to do a lot of things differently in order to get to where I want to be. It's been very challenging, but it's definitely been worth it.” — Emily



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