

HUCK'S REBIRTHDAY STORY



Written by Huck Talwar (He/Him)

Hey everyone, Huck (otherwise known as “Huckleberry”) from Youth MOVE National here to share a story of mine in order to explain how a single moment can lead to a new beginning of sorts, a realization, a difference, a feeling, a belief, an epiphany—I’m sure you get the idea. A moment where you **feel** your own personal definition of “rebirth” in any context you so choose to focus on. Before I share my ReBirthday story, I want to give everyone a content warning that I will be speaking of body image, eating disorders, and hospitalization.

When I was 19 and so close to graduating college with just a year left, I was diagnosed with an eating disorder. It started as anorexia then morphed into Eating Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (or EDNOS), which is now called Other Specified Feeding or Eating Disorder (or OSFED), to bulimia, back to OSFED, and landed on atypical anorexia at the end of 9 years in and out of mental institutions—some stints by choice and some by force, and 14 years of recovery. I have and will for the foreseeable future maintain the belief that eating disorder treatment is the most difficult thing I’ve ever had to do in my life.

I do feel it necessary to share that all of my hospitalizations were traumatic (but maybe I’ll go off on that systemic rant another time), but one of them helped so much more than it hurt. It was five years ago, and I’ll never forget it. I left that program so much better than when I entered it, and I haven’t had a single hospitalization since then. I met my absolute best friend, Maria, whom I could not imagine life without. I reconnected with my friends, one of whom is now my wife. I left with hope that I can maintain progress and a confidence that was new and so incredibly unfamiliar to me.

Three days after I got out of that program, I was running errands when I realized I hadn’t eaten lunch. I, of course, wanted to stay on track with my eating, so I stopped at a gas station for a snack (crackers) and a drink (apple juice). While I was picking out my crackers, a man came in, saw me, and started screaming obscenities filled with some of the most profane language I’ve heard—all about how fat I was. And I just froze. I felt my body tense up, I felt myself get hot to the point where I started feeling faint. I was frightened and incredibly activated. I thought to myself that I should put those crackers down, not even bother with the apple juice, and haul it out of there—after all, I’d burn more calories just continuing my errands, but I caught myself.



And I thought, why would I risk relapse over one other human’s judgment of me, and with no context at that? That man didn’t know about my experience. He didn’t know that I had an unstable relationship with food. He didn’t know that I was bullied my whole life. He didn’t know how many years of treatment I had been in, how many medications made me gain weight, about my hypothyroidism, he didn’t know anything about me except what I looked like. And that is such a small part of who I am. So I began to relax my muscles a bit. I didn’t even look in his direction. I took my crackers, grabbed my apple juice, and had a lovely conversation with the cashier, who complimented the dimple in my smile and told me my silence spoke volumes.

And that further validated the concept that we don’t know what anyone else is going through. We don’t know anyone else’s experience but our own. And knowing that fact, having that epiphany at **that** moment just **three days** after I left an eating disorder treatment program, is what left me with the ability to let things roll like water off a duck’s back. I no longer care, like, at all, what people think of my body. My body is mine, I’m taking care of it, it’s working. It lets me do every single thing I want to do. And others’ opinions of it are theirs. If I am ever being judged by my appearance, I now know there is something wrong with that thought, and not with my appearance.

I have learned to love my body the way it is, and that is the most empowering thing I could have imagined for myself for the first 29 years of my life. And this new ability to be present with myself and not take the judgements of others personally, has led to so much peace. A peace that I had never seen nor imagined I could ever achieve, much less sustain. It has made me think more clearly and create an emotional balance within myself that keeps me safe.

So, that one moment of my choosing crackers and apple juice over fear and intimidation has led to me loving my body, being a calmer human being, respecting others more, keeping myself balanced, and maintaining safety. In that very moment, I felt a change in myself—one that let me love myself as I was, and deciding that I am more important to me than others’ opinions of me has made my life so much more vibrant, with seemingly more things to do when you’re not focused on hating yourself so much. This was a choice that was almost unbelievable for me to make at that time of my life, and also one that changed the rest of it for the better.

I hope you enjoyed reading my REbirthday story and, if you’re proud of a moment when you felt empowered, when your voice and choice mattered, when your life was changed by *you looking out for you*, please feel free to share your story with us, too!



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Huck Talwar (he/him) is a Youth Program Specialist – Trainer at Youth MOVE National (YMN). In this role, Huck develops and delivers a variety of interactive workshops on various topics for diverse audiences. His areas of expertise include eating disorders, trauma and psychosis, and the LGBTQ+ community. Huck has taken part in numerous councils and workgroups, including MEIP (Maryland Early Intervention Program), SCCAN (State Council for Child Abuse and Neglect), Sources of Strength, and more. Huck started in the behavioral health field in 2019 as an administrative assistant, and worked his way into a role that utilizes his talents and creativity. Prior to joining YMN, Huck was a training specialist at On Our Own of Maryland, Inc. He was also a writer at Diamond International Galleries, writing reviews, editorials, and scripts, as well as conducting interviews with professional creators. This led to Huck strengthening his communication skills, which he uses in his current role to educate others on topics lesser known to the general public. His own lived experience has given Huck a passion with which he advocates for issues that face the well-being of those within the behavioral health system.