

Dear Ms. Katz,

I was shocked when I heard you speaking about your son Ian's death and how that came to be. You hear about young adults using drugs for many reasons. It only has me questions as to why they chose drugs. It was so socking that he would turn to drugs, when he had such a good family and friends. His life seemed to be lacking nothing.

I can't imagine your grief you must feel every time you give your talk to young audiences. I was amazed with your courage to come and speak to us and educate us as to what drugs and alcohol abuse can lead to. As I listened to you, I imagined in some ways it helps you to grieve for your son. In hopes that even if you reach one young adult in the audience it is maybe one life you can help save.

I have learned a lot from what you told us, how even one try of alcohol or drugs can end your life. Listening to you and becoming more informed has made me think harder about what are the choices I need to make for myself when these situations are presented to me. I believe that your son Ian will be in my mind when faced with these decisions. I think that his story will keep me reflecting on what type of future I want for myself.

Thank you, for taking the time to share your story about Ian. I walked away with some very important things to think about and choices I will have to make. I will use your strength and courage along the way.

Sincerely,

A solid black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

Dear Mrs. Katz

I really don't know how to start this letter but I will try my best. I know people who did drugs. It's really hard to live with. It's like you know somebody really well and you start to notice that they just change. I have a question, if a person does drugs they obviously know what it does to them so why do they do it? Is it that feeling of being high or is it because rappers rap about this stuff? I never understood that. When I read "Sunny's Story" I became really emotional because I know how it feels to see someone you love go away. It hurts kind of like a feeling you get when you don't know what to do. I wish I could just hug you. You're a really a brave women to read letters that mostly talk about your son. I wouldn't be able to take it, as I'm tearing making this letter. This has a lot of effect on me because I really hope when I grow up I don't do things like this. It doesn't only hurt me but the people around me as I noticed when reading "Sunny Story". Like you I wish I can rewind the times where I can just hug them, but it's hard to remember those times you know? I feel selfish to look back and see I was so rude to him and now that he isn't living with me, I see how it is to lose someone to drugs. I can relate to how people like you feel, because I would love to go back and hug my loved ones that I lost. Thank you Mrs. Katz.

Sincerely,

A solid black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area of the letter.

Dear Mrs. Katz,

The book you wrote really did inspire me to speak out. I live a hard life. Not only am I surrounded by drugs, I was born into drugs. On February 6, 2002, I was born. That's me. At almost a week old, I was taken by my aunt, Crystal. The reason why was because when I was born, there were drugs in my mother's system. So when they found out there were drugs in my mother's system, I guess they had to test me to see I had drugs in my system, and I did. Somehow it got to DCF, and that's how I was taken in by my Aunt Crystal. God Bless You, Auntie. Thank you for all you did, thank you.

Even though I was born into drugs, growing up life wasn't hard until the age of 8. Between the years 2009-2010, life began to get very hard for me. My anger kicked in, and my tears began to fall, everything happened. Even though I was surrounded by a lot of love, my mom's drug problem made things very tense and sometimes my family was very harsh with me. The pain I felt was like what I think a woman would go through when her husband files for a divorce and she doesn't know why he would do that.

On one bright, sunny warm day, at my old street, Pleasant Street, I had yet another breakdown. It was so embarrassing, but it helped me very, very much. My sister Tiasia had her friends over. I let out some of my anger. Then I remember my cousin calling me out, saying, "You think you big, you think you big, then let's take it outside." Then, all I remember is a big blowout, and I ran into my room and screamed into my pillow, "I hate you Mom, why would you leave me, why don't you want me, why do you hate me? God help me, please!" My cousin yelled, "Unlock the door now, open the door, I'm not playing with you!" So I let her in and covered myself like I was going to get hit. And she said, I'm not going to hit you, I just want to talk. It's not your fault. It's her fault. It's not all her fault; it's the drugs' fault too. Don't blame yourself for her mistakes. You don't understand, but you'll understand when you get older." What started out as a blowout ended up being a heart to heart conversation that helped me a lot.

P.S. To all drug users, from weed smokers to pill poppers, to injectors, to all types of users, if your family tells you that you need help, go out and get it. At least try. It's not worth it losing your family, friends, and pets- relationships over some drugs. Go get help. As you can see from this story, please listen to your family and friends.

P.P.S. Mrs. Katz, I'm sorry for your loss.

Sincerely,



Grade 5

March 6, 2013

Dear Ginger Katz,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am in the 7th grade at \_\_\_\_\_ School. I really learned a lot when you came to our class in January and shared yours and Ian's story about how bad drugs are and how they can end a life.

It was a very powerful story. I felt heartbroken for your family and what effect drugs had on your family. I now understand how you felt because I felt the pain when you told your story and I was on the verge of tears.

When I left your presentation I thought about you and I decided to read the book you gave me again.

You and your family have so much strength. I am really glad I got to meet you. Hearing Ian's story inspires me to become a strong person and not get into bad situations especially involving drugs.

During your story you shared how Ian lied to you about using drugs but I see how as a parent you were just trying to help him. This made me realize if a parent tells me something is bad I will now listen to them and not react.

Courage to speak is how you show kids drugs are bad. Instead you inspire them to make the right choices in life. Kids need to have a little faith in life and trust if they speak up they can get the help they need. God put us on this earth for a reason which is to live life to it's fullest and not get involved with drugs. Our body is everything we have and we cannot abuse them with drugs. We only get one body in this life.

Thank you Ginger Katz for changing my life and other students lives. You inspire, you educate and you share your story with many and it touches everyone.

Again thank you. I will spread your message onto others.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
7<sup>th</sup> Grade

Dear Mrs. Katz,

Thank you for coming to Roton Middle School and talking to the 7th grade about your Courage to Speak program. The 7th grade really got something out of your program. We learned that drugs can change not just your life, but your whole family's life, it can also change your grades, and your future.

Your presentation made a change on everyone. Ian made the wrong decision but I know that because of your presentation many will make the right decision. Once Ian had started doing drugs he was addicted, nothing would stop him. I know that you are trying to get the message out that "trying" something can hook you for life. No parent should have to go through what your family had gone through. Maybe Ian didn't know that it would put his life on risk, but because of your program everyone will know and you may put an end to drugs.

Thank you so much for doing what you do, you don't know how much your changing the world. I am very sorry for your loss of Ian.



Sincerely,

[Redacted Signature]  
Roton M. School  
10/19/11

**Leonard J. Tyl Middle  
School**

166 Chesterfield Road  
Oakdale, CT 06370

The Courage to Speak Foundation, Inc.  
P.O. Box, 1527  
Norwalk, CT 06852

Mrs. Ginger Katz,

My school recently had a red ribbon/drug awareness week in which we learned about your foundation and your son Ian. I am so moved by what you do and how you used what happened to Ian to educate others about the dangers of drugs. Neither I nor any of my family has ever had issues with drugs or smoking, which I am so very thankful for; but I can see how widespread the problem is, especially among youths these days. One in every eight teens has depression to one degree or another, me being among that fraction, so I can understand how some might think that turning to drugs could help them, make them feel good. People need to understand from early on that in reality, drugs can kill you, and in the long term, they won't make you happy. So keep on talking to people about drugs – it could make a huge difference in someone's life, and prevent what happened to you from happening to another parent.

Sincerely,



*Ignorance isn't Bliss,  
when it comes to the  
Dangers of Drugs.*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade Student

10/25/11

Dear Mrs Katz,

The courage to speak assembly touch my heart. Ian's story was very sad, but now I know what happens when we takes drugs. I wish that Ian had never taking drugs. I can see how feel when Ian died. I never known that drugs can do that too you. You told me that I can talk to someone. I know that one day someone will ask me to take drugs and I have to have the courage to speak and say no. Some of my family members died too because they used drugs. I knew how you feel when Ian died. While the assembly I saw that some people didn't want to believe that Ian story was true, they didn't want to believe that it happened. I can't believe that drugs can do that too you. I want to say thank you for coming all telling Ian's story. Thank you so much!

From,

[Redacted Signature]

Hello Mrs. Katz,

You came to my school today. I would just like to say thank you, I was the one who said I went through what Ian went through, I am also very sorry for you lost.

But I just wanted to say what I meant when I said I went through the same Ian did. No, I've never done drugs but I was curious I was molested at a very young age. I told my mom & she was shocked.

Like Ian am an honor roll student. I don't do sports but I have been told I'm a good friend and I'm funny so and so. The thing that hit me most was that I could see myself in Ian. We're two completely different people yet I was scared I would end up like him. Again like I said I was curious, and my friends had been telling me about what they did (smoke, drink, etc.) But I stopped myself I thought about Ian, he wouldn't want this you wouldn't.

Things happen for a reason. The memories of my molestation has made me very sad but it has also pushed me to become someone. I asked my mother to see a therapist. I had tried to hide my pain for so long but I saw I wasn't myself, I became very rude and depressed. I myself took pain out of myself, tell myself I was never right, began to have anxiety attacks. I was scared of people touching me and standing up for myself.

Now I have spoken, and I can't explain how thankful I am. I hope to be like you one day but talk to children about being touched wrong. You have opened my eyes I have changed today. I told my mom and she said thank you as well. Today was probably the best day of my life. Thank you both Mr. & Mrs. Katz

You are my inspiration, I hope everything goes well on the O'Riley show & soon that everyone knows about Ian. Another goal of mine is to be an actress/director and if when I'm older and no one has made a movie about Sunny's Story I will try my best too. What you do is amazing, thank you again so much.

Sincerely,