

Nysha Camilo - Buffalo

Good morning,

My name is Nysha Camilo. I am employed with Buffalo Public Schools as a teacher aide for 1 year on the 24th. I started working with children in 2019 at the Boys & Girls club shortly after schools closed and switched to virtual. I saw up close the effects of not only the pandemic but also virtual schooling. I would like to share some things about myself before I get into my point of view on mental health support accessibility. I am 22 years old. I am a suicide, child abuse, and a sexual assault survivor. Many years of my life have been experiences in the mental health field. At 9 years old, I started self harming, at 10 I developed an eating disorder, at 12 was my first suicide attempt. I have been hospitalized multiple times at Brylin and ECMC. I have lived at the Children's Psychiatric Center in West Seneca as well as Baker Victory Residential Homes. While I am lucky to have had mental health services since I was 12 years old, many don't ever bring themselves to the benefits of the practice. Mental health is still very stigmatized in the world although the effects of refusing to acknowledge its existence is clear. I can't help but wonder if the reality of what mental health is and how to achieve one's best self was taught as a youth then the world wouldn't be the way it is. Working with youth has made me realize that sadly, I am not the only one who experienced so much trauma in my childhood. Now, an added realization was that there was no way for me to know the extent of what I was experiencing when I was younger. When staff words of guidance would click in my head, I would quickly be chastised by my family, instantly sending a wave of guilt over my body. Almost immediately, I would spiral right back down into my negative ways. Now, I am aware that my father is a narcissist who controlled my whole family. Narcissists are really good manipulators, Ted Bundy is an excellent example so you can get the idea I'm giving! Everyone thought he was a good person, handsome, and whole. Little did anyone know he was a serial killer. My point in sharing this is that as educational support staff, there is no way for us to control things like that. There is no way for the youth experiencing that to control their environment either. There is no way for the youth to even fully comprehend the effects of their environment while living there. My opinion is that mental, emotional, and social skills should be taught in every school in every stage of growth, meaning in elementary,

middle, and high school. As I work in a high school now, it has become so evident to me the need for classes including those vital skills along with life skills, such as laundry, cooking, cleaning, etc. to be taught to students. Maybe not all students, but I can guarantee at least the majority of them do. Is there an assessment that can be made to be able to tell who qualifies? Anything is possible. My reasoning for this is that while we are not able to control the environment at home we are still able to provide the youth with the necessary skills to not only exceed academically but also personally and socially. Majority of youth are exposed to tough environments in many different ways, most parents are just trying their best from what they know and have learned. Many parents, especially from an urban background are not even comfortable with asking for help because of the fear of being judged and they may even get Child Protective Services called on them. Believe it or not, most parents do not know the rights they have, especially pertaining to school and the court systems. I am aware that the school has parent nights, is it possible the schools can provide more support to parents? Or hire a company that can. Parental classes, parental right classes, mental health classes, etc. Support is needed all around the world not only in Buffalo, New York but here can be a start. We can lead the world. According to Maslow's Theory, there are levels to achieve your best self. You can skip a level, but then are you really at your best self? The world has taught us to skip levels. I believe this is why violence, anger, pain, and negativity is the majority. Mental health matters. Is it not obvious?