



"Mother and Child," Naomi Janine © 2009*

My Natural Supports

by James VanOver

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My name is James VanOver and I am a student at Morse High School.

I have had many supports in my life. Even from the very beginning. I am now proud to share the supports that have helped me get through. The first support would be my biological mother. I'm saying this because a mother's willingness to give up her child and put him or her in a better environment is probably one of the hardest things a mother can do. It's the fact that she was brave enough to admit that she could not support me in the lifestyle she was living.

My next support would be my family. They have been there for me all along. From adoption all the way up to me about to graduate. From the moment my adoptive mother set eyes on me, I knew deep down inside she would always care for me no matter what I did. Even though it did take me many years to figure it out. My family has helped me beyond my expectations. When there was something I was struggling in, they did whatever it took to make accommodations for me. They supported me by encouraging me to do well, setting good examples, showing me that everything isn't associated with pain and just to be happy. Unfortunately most of my life that wasn't easy for me. Especially from the background I was from. I was born January 25, 1992, in Manassas, Virginia. From the start, I was neglected and abused. My biological mother had a severe drug problem and she was a prostitute. She did hit me a lot but also didn't pay attention to me. So often I wasn't fed or taken care of. When I was adopted I was still under the impression that pain had to do with everything. I didn't even know how to talk. I didn't know what most little children did know like Sesame Street, Barney, etc. I pretty much wasn't exposed to the outside world until I was four. Then that would all change forever. My new family came into the mix. For the first time in my life, I felt comfort, safety, health, and most of all, love.

My third support would be Oliver Place. That is the group home I am currently staying at. When I moved in during the summer of '08, I was a completely different person than I am now. I hated to admit that they just wanted to help me. I fought and fought against them just so they would give up. But they didn't. They have taught me to be independent and to seek support when I need it. They have changed the complete outlook of how I view things. I can now take ownership of what I've done wrong. I can even do repair work in relationships. Oliver Place is another main reason I am still graduating. They never gave up on me, and most of all, they didn't let me give up on myself. I truly do thank Oliver Place for helping me get this far.

The last of my supports would be my teachers. I'd like to thank Mrs. Lucas, Mrs. Huntwood, Mrs. Armstrong, Mrs. Heathco, E.B.; Mrs. Madden and Mrs. Hutchins for supporting me throughout the school year, and making everything I'm doing possible.

It is a great privilege to be here. I truly am thankful for all the supports in my life. Without them I would just fall apart. My supports being with me have now taught me to be a stronger person. I hope my speech will inspire young adults to seek support now and in the generations to come.

My life is like the Japanese proverb:
"Fall down seven times. Stand up eight."

Thank you.