Letter from a Dad . . .

My daughter came home telling me that a man (Jeff Yalden) had spoken at her school describing the event as very impactful. Mr. Yalden took the time to visit and coach me on things I needed to do and things I needed to do differently. Parenting a depressed teenager was something I had never experienced and in many cases was not doing it well. In many cases the way I reacted to things was not healthy for my son.

I first met Jeff Yalden at our local high school following an assembly where he had spoke to our High School students on topics such as suicide prevention and depression. I was unaware that the event was even taking place that day. My daughter came home telling me that a man (Jeff Yalden) had spoken at her school describing the event as very impactful. She also shared that she wished her brother had been at the event that day to hear what the speaker had to say.

My daughter was aware that Mr. Yalden would be at the school that evening to recap with parents what he had shared with students earlier in the day. We returned to the school that evening. Arriving early I hoped for the opportunity to get few minutes with Mr. Yalden to discuss challenges my son was facing with depression. Surprisingly to me Mr. Yalden already new the situation. A student earlier that day had expressed concern for his friend. Mr. Yalden cared enough to follow up with school administration to learn more about the situation.

Mr. Yalden took the time to visit and coach me on things I needed to do and things I needed to do differently. Parenting a depressed teenager was something I had never experienced and in many cases was not doing it well. In many cases the way I reacted to things was not healthy for my son.

Several months have past since Mr. Yalden visited our school. My sons condition seemed to be deteriorating. He struggled to attend school. Refused to take his medication. Didn’t feel a need to see his doctors. Stopped seeing his therapist. He frequently mentioned not having a will to live. For me I really did not know where to turn.

I thought back on the conversation I had with Mr. Yalden and the impact my daughter said he had on students a few months earlier. I decided to send Mr. Yalden a email explaining the situation. I was really lost were to go from here. I was unsure if I would even get a response back as I know he is a very busy man, speaks to hundreds on young people a week, and my boy is only one person.

This is were the story gets exciting. The next day Mr. Yalden called me. We discussed my concerns regarding my son. Mr. Yalden remembered our initial meeting and said I am willing to help. He put together a video reaching out to my son inviting him into a relationship with Mr. Yalden as a “Significant Trusted Adult”. At this point it was up to my son to choose the invitation or not. Things on his end did not happen quickly but he did make the first step, reached out, and admitted he needed help.

Today, Mr. Yalden and I as well and Mr. Yalden and my son communicate on a daily basis. Their relationship continues to grow. With the support of Mr. Yalden we now have a plan to finish High School. We have made a Doctor’s appointment that would not have happened without his support and each morning starts with taking the medications prescribed for him. A few days ago he was reviewing a **28 Day Plan** that Mr. Yalden is couching him through.

Today we are celebrating small wins. The successes are more frequently. This is progress that undoubtedly would not have happened without the support of Jeff Yalden.

**This is a text when this young man graduated and walked across the stage. I still continue to be in touch with this young man. Super proud of him for doing the work. – Jeff Yalden**

 