

The Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange is a program of Judson Center and is funded by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. To learn about foster care adoption and view photolistings and videos of children, visit our website at www.mare.org.



Mindfulness meditation for teens during these very trying times

STORY BY **KRISTINE CRUMMEL, MARE MATCH SUPPORT PROGRAM SPECIALIST**

Here's a positive challenge for you during this pandemic: Take charge of what you can control.

As anxiety runs high, lower your stress by giving meditation a try. After all, anyone can do it, and you don't need to sit cross-legged to practice it.

As you go through the suggested routines here, keep in mind that meditation is not about clearing all your thoughts. That is an impossible task since no one can be void of thought. Meditation is about bringing yourself to a place

of calm and control.

So let's start by placing your feet flat on the floor and sitting up straight. Inhale slowly through your nose and make sure your belly expands. (You can place a hand on your stomach to make sure you are doing it correctly.) Hold that breath, then exhale while pushing as you breathe out. Let it all go. Repeat at least three times or more as needed.

Congratulations! You just meditated. Those breaths can make a big difference.

This technique gives you a chance to catch up with your emotions while setting aside some of your thoughts. Look, being a teenager is challenging enough during this pandemic, especially with everything you have to stress about. Thinking about your next exam? When you can see your friends? Family issues? When life will return back to the way things were?

It is OK. Acknowledge the thoughts you are having, then

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Kristine Crummel

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redirect your attention back to yourself by focusing on your breathing. Mindfulness meditation can help you learn how to regulate your emotions and connect with yourself on a deeper level. This is where you will gain control of your thoughts, emotions and behaviors.

Meditation can help with self-esteem, memory, balancing your immune system and reducing your blood pressure and heart rate.

That being said, mindfulness meditation is called a practice because it takes actual practice to get better at it. You may struggle to quiet your mind at first. That is OK; everyone does.

The great thing about meditation is there is no wrong way to do it! Still struggling? There are guided meditations available through YouTube to help you practice.

Do things feel out of control around you? Then, take back your power. Give yourself some peace. Mindfulness works to reduce anxiety. Just STOP, BREATHE and THINK (for as long as you need to). You've got this!!

Kristine Crummel used her knowledge to meld mindfulness, meditation and yoga together and has been teaching others her technique for about 10 years. If you have a question for her, send it to Kristine_Crummel@judsoncenter.org.

Online resource helps you navigate your way to and through college

Attention youth with experience in foster care in Michigan! Are you thinking about college? Michigan has many resources available to help you pay for and get through college!

The Fostering Success Michigan Statewide Virtual College Fair took place on Oct. 21, 2020 with more than 100 attendees and 15 campuses. You can find links to recordings of the sessions at the web address listed below!

In addition, the website offers online guidance, from getting ready for college, to choosing a school, to finding financial aid, to applying for entrance, and more. You also can see links for more info about each of the participating programs.

<http://fosteringuccessmichigan.com/library/virtual-college-fair-toolkit>



Youth share their talent with families via MARE's 20 in 2020 project

In-Depth Profiles are featured on a new extension of MARE's website to highlight and showcase the Interests of youth in their own words.

Check out the extended profiles of Zandra and

Jennifer at mare.indepthprofiles.org

If you want to participate in an In-Depth Profile, contact your worker or MARE's Jennifer Brooks, jennifer_brooks@judsoncenter.org.



Jennifer plans a series of novels

Spend a little time with Jennifer, and quickly you'll arrive at her greatest passion these days: her novel.

Well, it will eventually be five novels, spanning an entire series entitled "The Swavian Chronicles." She loves imagining the world, creating the characters, and dreaming up the ever-evolving plotlines.

It's a passion birthed from her love of sci-fi/fantasy fiction and for the past year or so, she's jotted down note after note in her notebooks to tell the gripping saga.

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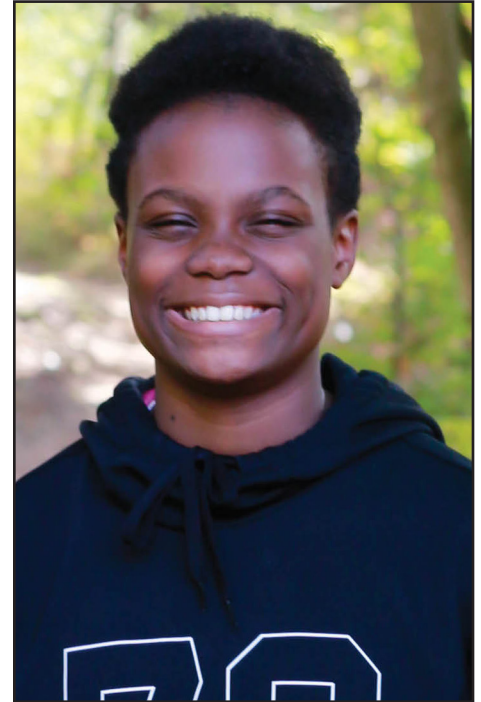
Zandra uses her poetry as an outlet

Writing is very important to Zandra.

For the past year or two, she has begun writing her own poetry, as a way to express herself.

"It lets me write down all of my feelings and lets stuff get out and lets all of my feelings get onto a piece of paper," she says.

Zandra was quick to point to her poetry as something she wanted to include in her In-Depth Profile. On the experience of sharing it through this project, she says: "I felt good about myself, that I could actually share it with other people. I didn't keep it a secret and maybe it could inspire someone else."



The Animal that Lives Beneath my Skin by Zandra

The animal that lives beneath my skin is a beast.
It never gives up.
It does its best in everything it do.
It'll pass any test.
It's loyal.
If it wants something, it gets it.
It never settles for less.
Nothing will ever be enough because it deserves much more.
The animal beneath my skin is strong.
It'll get through anything.
It never loses a fight.
It's never scared.
It's feared.
It always keeps its guard up.
She who lives beneath my skin is a lion.

Jennifer has written the first sentence for each of the books in her series, and she's created 79 characters.

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Jennifer said “yes” to the opportunity to create her own In-Depth Profile, because she wants to share directly with potential adoptive families. Not only did she want to share about her book series, but she reviewed her own profile, made edits, picked out pictures, and ensured this entire page looks just how she wants it to.

From start-to-finish, Jennifer was in the driver’s seat about how she wants to be involved in the family search process. Jennifer wanted her In-Depth Profile to spotlight her love of writing and her beloved fiction series she is beginning to write. And she was generous to share so many details and behind-the-scenes peeks with families!

Jennifer's Sci-Fi/Fantasy
Book Series Recommendations

1. Harry Potter
2. The Inheritance Cycle
3. The Hunger Games
4. Lord of the Rings

"I've loved fiction, magic, and adventure for as long as I can remember."
-Jennifer

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YOUTH RESOURCES

Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative - MYOI is a partnership between the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, the Oakland/Livingston Human Services Agency and many other local community partners. MYOI's goal is to ensure that young people in foster care have successful outcomes in housing, education, employment, community engagement and health.

(Michigan.gov/FYIT > MYOI)



Foster Youth in Transition - MDHHS website geared towards older youth who are experiencing foster care. It's a comprehensive, youth-oriented site with advice, interactive features, a useful glossary of foster care terms, and information on a variety of issues important to current and former foster youth. The site provides links on how to develop supports, find services, get answers to important questions and just keep you posted on what's new. (Michigan.gov/FYIT)



FosterClub - FosterClub is a national network for young people in foster care and young foster care alumni. The site includes blogs from current foster youth, success stories from youth who were in the foster system as well as celebrities who faced foster care. It also provides a listing by state of contact information for professionals and hotlines. (www.fosterclub.com 503-717-1552)