

DIGNITY STORIES

EXAMPLES

AGES 10+

“My cousin—and good friend—is bound to a wheelchair [...] Unfortunately his school wasn’t designed to accommodate wheelchair users, so he couldn’t access the school canteen upstairs. He had to sit and eat lunch in the classroom all alone, and could not participate in the social arena of the canteen. [...] He made it seem like he preferred to eat in the classroom. He thought it was humiliating and embarrassing to tell his friends that he couldn’t get to the canteen to eat together with them, so he said that he liked to do his homework during the break so he didn’t have to do it later.

[...] Thankfully, his friendship with his classmates was not based on pity. [...] After a while they understood that he didn’t eat in the canteen because he simply could not access it, not because he preferred to eat in the classroom like he said he did. So they sat and ate in the classroom with him. Not because they felt sorry for him or because they wanted to do the right thing, but because they really wanted to be together with him—and he with them.”

(The story has been abridged.)

GIRL, 17 YEARS OLD, OLSVIKÅSEN UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL

SOURCE: GLOBAL DIGNITY, NORWAY

“A few years ago I hit rock bottom, devastated after having failed at what I was doing. During a motocross event I pulled into the depot in utter despair. My father came down, tapped on my helmet and said, “What’s wrong? We don’t do this to be the best, we do it for fun. Out you go and have some fun. Don’t be so hard on yourself.” Dad never put pressure on me to do anything; the only pressure I felt was the pressure I put on myself. After that, I actually managed to climb up to seventh place in the Norwegian championships in my age group. The experience helped me not to be so hard on myself, but to try to think positively instead.”

BOY, 17 YEARS OLD, ST. HALLVARD UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL

SOURCE: GLOBAL DIGNITY, NORWAY



“My story about dignity is about a good friend of mine. He has a younger brother who has an illness that makes him very nervous about new things. His younger brother was supposed to start eighth grade and he was, as I said, very nervous. My friend decided to walk his brother to school for as long as it took for him to feel that he could go on his own. He walked him to school for six months.”

BOY, 17 YEARS OLD, ST. HALLVARD UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL

SOURCE: GLOBAL DIGNITY, NORWAY

“I have been bothered many times because I have been too scared or insecure to speak out or do what I think is right. I think at some time or other everyone has felt scared or unsure about speaking out or disagreeing with their best friends. They say that it is easier to keep silent than to speak out, but friends mean so much, and in many cases they mean everything.

When I have chosen to keep silent or not do anything, it doesn't feel good either. My conscience bothers me. A turning point for me was when I dared to put my friendship aside and speak my mind. Although I may have risked my friendship at the time, I thought that defending another person was more important. It also felt like the right thing to do. Standing up for someone who needs protection gives me a nice, warm feeling, because it means a lot for the person who has been protected and everyone around us—including myself.”

GIRL, GRADE 10, BJØRNHOLT SCHOOL

SOURCE: GLOBAL DIGNITY, NORWAY

“At a meeting of the student council we distributed tasks and I took on the responsibility for leading the annual fundraising campaign for disadvantaged young people. I got other students who were interested in working with street children to join the committee. Together we put together a programme and charity action to collect money for street children. The committee worked closely with the Red Cross, and we decided that we wanted to help street children in St. Petersburg this year.

We travelled to St. Petersburg to get an idea of how we could help and find out what would be considered constructive help. While we were there we all came to the realisation that the lives of street children lacked dignity. I felt that those street children could have well been me, except that they would never have fallen so low in Norway.

My need to help these children became stronger. I understood that my contribution would help to make others' lives better. The fact that someone cared meant a tremendous amount to the children we met. This experience taught me how little it takes to help others, and how much it meant to them that I had chosen to help them freely. Not only did the fact that I had volunteered meant a lot to others, it meant a lot to me as well. Having had this experience has changed me in some way.”

BOY, 17 YEARS OLD, BJØRNHOLT SCHOOL

SOURCE: GLOBAL DIGNITY, NORWAY