



Coping In Crisis

By Manny Oñate

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Character Breakdown

Ariel: Intelligent and confident. Always good intentioned

Tyler: Kind and considerate. Dislikes confrontation

Lola: Bubbly and energetic. Not afraid to stand up for
friends

Props Breakdown (by scene)

Coping with COVID

- Phones (all)
- Masks (all)

Gender Issues

- Backpacks (all)

Income Inequality

- Backpacks (all)
- Bag of Clothes (Ariel)

Special Needs

- Backpacks (all)
- Essays (Tyler and Lola)

Racism and Bias

- Backpacks (all)
- Hurtful Notes (Tyler)

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INTRODUCTION

GREY BRICK VB

(ARIEL, TYLER and LOLA, enter, in that order)

ARIEL

Hi! I'm Ariel!

TYLER

I'm Tyler!

LOLA

And I'm Lola!

ARIEL

We all go to the same school. I don't think it's different from any other school but some interesting stuff has still happened.

LOLA

Interesting, and many times scary and confusing. We thought this stuff couldn't happen at our school, but it did.

TYLER

And we struggled with a lot of it. We didn't do the right thing right away when we had the chance. Which is why we are here today. We want to help you make smart decisions in these difficult situations.

COPING WITH COVID

LOLA

I remember before the coronavirus, I would hang out with my friends all the time. I love being around people and socializing and I am definitely a hugger, so social distancing has been hard for me. One month in the summer my friends and I got in some trouble. One day I was talking with Tyler, we were just talking about some shows we'd been watching when he suggested that we should all go to a lake nearby.

TYLER

(enters) It would be so fun! Me, you and Ariel finally hanging out!

LOLA

Yeah, that sounds super fun but my parents would never let me go!

TYLER

Um, why?!?

LOLA

Ummmm covid 19 obviously. With all the restrictions my parents won't let me. Even without restrictions they wouldn't- they are super scared.

TYLER

Well they are way overreacting. My family has been doing the same stuff as always and we have been just fine.

LOLA

Well I'm glad you guys are okay....

TYLER

I'm gonna text Ariel and see if she wants to go to the lake. I'm gonna get a big group together. Just try not to be such a chicken about all the COVID stuff (Exits)

LOLA

I wanted to tell Tyler it was a bad idea but I didn't want to make him mad. I really wanted to go to the lake with them but I don't want to get in trouble with my parents or potentially get sick. I decided to call Ariel later that night.

ARIEL

Hey!

LOLA

Hey Ariel. Has Tyler texted you today?

ARIEL

Yeah he was talking about maybe going to the lake.

LOLA

Are you going?

ARIEL

I don't know. It sounds fun but he started talking about inviting a whole bunch of people and that kind of made me nervous.

LOLA

Okay I'm glad I'm not alone. And besides, my family would never let me go to anything right now.

ARIEL

I told my parents about his idea and they weren't really sure about it. They said they'd be okay with it if it were just the three of us and we were socially distanced.

LOLA

Ugh. I wish my parents were like that! They are so strict. I can't count how many times they've taken my temperature since this started.

ARIEL

They are definitely being careful! Tyler was telling me how his family hasn't been doing any of the recommendations. He even had some family come in from out of town and they all went out to eat. He said it was like twenty of them!

LOLA

Seriously? I get it, these guidelines can be frustrating but I don't get how or why they won't do any of it, like, that's just dangerous. Like it's not fair to the people who actually are being safe.

ARIEL

I tried to tell him that but he just told me I was overreacting. I said that the big lake day might not be the best idea, but that we could maybe try to hangout just the three of us!

LOLA

See I would be a little more comfortable with that as long as we social distanced and wore masks and stuff. (sighs) I'll try talking to my parents tomorrow and see if they would be okay with that. I'll talk to you later Ariel!

ARIEL

See ya!

LOLA

And so the next morning before they started work, I talked to my parents about our idea of having a socially distanced hang out. They weren't having it and I get it. See, my mom has an autoimmune disease which means that she gets sick easier than the rest of us. I wouldn't want to risk my mom's health, but I don't know how much longer I can stand being cooped up in this house! It's so boring!(exits)

ARIEL

My family has been doing okay during COVID. My older brother is a nurse so when this started he moved out and started staying with some of his co-workers so that we weren't as likely to get sick, since he would be at the hospital treating patients every day. We've been going on a lot of hikes and runs as a family. We've ordered some takeout too because neither of my parents are very good at cooking. Not that I'd ever be the one to tell them that. Still it's been difficult.

TYLER

My family hasn't been taking COVID seriously and it kind of scares me. You wouldn't know that from talking to me about it but I just don't want them to hear me being worried about it. My parents told me I should try to get some friends to have a lake party to get me out of the house. Thankfully not enough people showed interest so it isn't going to happen. I have two older siblings too and they've been going out whenever they want, no mask or anything. I don't think you should stay home all day every day, but I just wish my family would take at least some precautions. I tried telling them that to, but no one was listening and my brother and sister would tease me so, I stopped trying. It's so hard. (LOLA and ARIEL enter)

ALL

And I really miss my friends.

LOLA

A few days later we were all facetimeing.

ARIEL

Hey guys!!! I miss you!!

LOLA

Me too!

TYLER

Same! And by the way, lake day is off but we should still try to hangout the three of us!

ARIEL

Yes please!

LOLA

I'd love that!

TYLER

Does tomorrow night work?

ARIEL

It works for me.

LOLA

Ugh! my parents won't let me go to anything. I'm sorry.

ARIEL

Even if we socially distanced and wear our masks?

LOLA

No, and besides do you even have a mask Tyler?

TYLER

(quietly, as not to be heard by family) Yeah of course I do.

LOLA

Oh? I thought we were "overreacting"?

TYLER

(looks behind shoulder) Hey, I'm sorry I said that to both of you, my family is just kinda.... Well, I'll explain it in person tomorrow if we hang out.

ARIEL

Eeee! I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU TWO!! Can you go Lola??

LOLA

I really really reeeeeeallly wanna go but I just can't!

ARIEL

Just sneak out! it'll only be the three of us c'mon Lola!

TYLER

It'll be safe and you can get home before they would even notice!

LOLA

I don't know....

ARIEL and TYLER

Plleeeaaassee!!!!

LOLA

Fine! We just can't hang out for super long okay?

ARIEL

YAY!!!!

TYLER

YES! Of course! This is gonna be great! (TYLER and ARIEL exit)

LOLA

So the next night I snuck out after my parents fell asleep. I had my mask, my phone, a set of house keys and a dog treat for when I got back so Max, our dog, wouldn't wake them up. I had it all planned out. We met at a park that was in between our houses. It was so amazing to see my friends! We talked and joked around for a while and then it was time to head home. (LOLA exits, TYLER enters)

TYLER

My parents had no issue with me seeing my friends. my family teased me when they saw I was bringing a mask but I didn't let it bother me- if social distancing and wearing a mask is what it takes to be safe and make my friends comfortable. (TYLER exits, ARIEL enters)

ARIEL

My parents said I could go as long as I was careful. When I told them Lola was meeting us they seemed surprised. They asked me if her parents knew and I didn't know what to say so... I lied and said that they did. It was so nice to see Lola and Tyler but afterwards I was nervous for Lola. (ARIEL exits, LOLA enters)

LOLA

I was walking home when I noticed a car approach me. And then I noticed that it was my parents car... yeah... they noticed I was gone and tried calling and texting me but I was having such a good time with my friends that I completely forgot I had turned my phone off. They called Ariel's parents to see if they knew where we would be. I was in big trouble and I know Ariel got in trouble too. My parents said that if I was struggling with quarantine and COVID and everything going on I should have just told them. They told me what I did was irresponsible, and it was, but that they understood that I missed my friends. After I was done being grounded, my parents decided that we could host backyard movie nights for Tyler, Ariel and I with an old projector we had.

ARIEL

COVID has definitely put a strain on our friendships.

TYLER

And a strain with family, but thankfully we got creative and found safe ways to see each other without risking anybody's health.

LOLA

By social distancing and wearing masks when we see each other, we are able to stay safe but also hang out like we used to. And together, we can get through these unprecedented times.

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GENDER ISSUES

BLUE LOCKERS VB

TYLER

So this is a story about when Ariel and I applied for positions at our school newspaper. It was early in the school year and applications were just opening up. (ARIEL enters)

ARIEL

Hey! Can I send you my application? I want to make sure it's perfect!

TYLER

Sure, but what do you mean?

ARIEL

Well I'm applying to be editor so I have to send in an extra essay explaining what my vision for the paper is and why I'm qualified! I won the essay contest we had at school last year and wrote the most articles! I just know I'll get it! There is no way the journalism teacher Mr. Henderson could pick anyone else! Are you applying for any positions?

TYLER

Yeah, but I don't really care, so I'm just gonna check all of the boxes on my application. I think I'm gonna make mine kinda funny cause I feel like adding a joke section to the paper would be a good idea!

ARIEL

Well, when I become editor I can get you that joke section! (exits)

TYLER

WOOD WALL VB

So when I got home I looked at Ariel's application. Her essay was perfect. I literally couldn't find a single thing wrong with it. I told her it was great and then started working on my essay. I didn't really want to be editor but I figured if I could make some jokes I could get that joke section maybe. I filled it with a whole bunch of puns:

Did you know that newspapers can be recycled? Sorry if that's old news!

Get it? Like you would recycle an old newspaper? Or if you didn't like that how about this one- Why did the reporter talk to the ice cream? He wanted to get the scoop!

Funny right?!?! I filled it with a bunch more puns because honestly I don't really have any experience with a lot of writing or the newspaper but I knew Ariel would be Editor so I felt good about sending it in. A few days later the positions were posted in the hallway. I had a meeting with another teacher so I didn't get a chance to see the results. (LOLA enters)

HALLWAY VB

LOLA

Tyler! Did you seriously do that?

TYLER

(clueless) Do what?

LOLA

You stole from Ariel's essay!

TYLER

No I didn't!

LOLA

Well then how did you get Editor??

TYLER

Wait, what?!?!

LOLA

Yeah! Ariel is super upset!

TYLER

I didn't even wanna be editor!

LOLA

Well then why would you apply?!?

TYLER

To get a joke section in the paper!

LOLA

Ugh whatever! (LOLA exits, ARIEL enters)

TYLER

Ariel! I am so sorry! I didn't think they would actually pick me to be editor! I promise I didn't copy you. I just wrote a bunch of jokes!

ARIEL

(sad, disinterested) I know. I'm not mad at you. Look, I don't want to talk about this right now. (ARIEL exits).

TYLER

I've gotta go talk to Mr. Henderson and figure out why he picked me for editor. (TYLER exits)

ARIEL

(re-enters, determined) You know what, no! I am mad! Not at Tyler but at Mr. Henderson! I have worked so hard and Mr. Henderson knows that! How could he not pick me! And not to be rude, but how could he pick *Tyler?!?!?* He literally just sent a list of puns and jokes! Ugh!!!! (takes a deep breath) okay. I am just gonna go ask Mr. Henderson why he picked Tyler over me.

BLUE LOCKERS VB

So I went to Mr. Henderson's room but noticed Tyler was already in there. I didn't want it to be awkward so I waited outside. And what I heard broke my heart. Mr. Henderson told Tyler that he didn't want me to be editor because I wouldn't do a good enough job covering the sports teams and I would be too serious. He also told Tyler that most of the writers this year were boys and he didn't think they would listen if the editor was a girl. At first I didn't really get it. I could do the job better than Tyler. But then it hit me. It was because of sexism. I didn't get the editor position just because I'm a girl. (ARIEL exits, TYLER enters)

TYLER

I wanted to have a conversation with Mr. Henderson. But honestly, he just kept talking and talking and I never got a chance to say what I wanted to. Eventually I had to go because I didn't want to be late for the bus. I texted Ariel and Lola a couple of times but they never responded. I felt so stuck. Obviously, Mr. Henderson wanted me as editor and I knew he told some of his classes my funny jokes, so other people were excited too. But I didn't want to ruin my friendship with Ariel and Lola. Plus I don't know the first thing about editing a newspaper. (exits, LOLA

enters)

LOLA

Ariel told me what she heard and we decided to talk about it with the school counselor, Mrs. Hawkins. She told us that something like this should never happen and that she would let the principal and school board know what Mr. Henderson said. I didn't say much but I was just happy to be there and help Ariel feel comfortable.

(LOLA exits, TYLER enters)

TYLER

I decided to go in and talk to Mr. Henderson and told him that Ariel should be editor instead of me. I also told him that I didn't like what he said to me the other day. He seemed kind of mad and told me that he would do what was best for the paper. I also started telling the rest of the school what he had told me. People deserved to know that he wasn't a fair teacher and played favorites. (ARIEL enters)

ARIEL

Eventually, the school decided that Mr. Henderson needed "help" with the paper and they had the English teacher Ms. Hart get involved in making decisions as well. She decided that having co-editors, one boy and one girl, would be the best moving forward. The paper also added extra positions to get more people involved.

(TYLER clears his throat)

haha and we also added a joke column that Tyler was in charge of.

TYLER

But I decided that my first column should be more serious, and with some help from Ariel, I wrote an article about sexism and how to prevent it.

ARIEL

It turns out Tyler is a better writer than we thought. And it helped make school a more equal and safe place.

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INCOME INEQUALITY

BLUE LOCKERS VB

ARIEL

I remember one month last year where a new girl came to our school. She didn't end up staying

very long and transferred again after about two months.

LOLA

Her name was Mary, and I will be playing her in the show which might sound confusing but we promise it will make sense. (MARY exits)

ARIEL

Mary was pretty quiet and never made many friends. I still remember the first time I saw her at school. (TYLER enters) Tyler and I were talking by my locker on Monday when we saw her. (MARY enters)

MARY

Ummm. Hi. I think my locker is behind you.

TYLER

Oh! Sorry about that. I don't recognize you, are you new here?
(MARY nods)
Okay well my name is Tyler.

ARIEL

And I'm Ariel! What's your name?

MARY

(unintelligible) Mary.

ARIEL

What?

MARY

Mary

ARIEL

It's nice to meet you! Hey if you're not busy, we were going to see a movie after school today!
Do you wanna come?

MARY

Oh... I don't think so. sorry.

TYLER

Why not? It will be fun!

MARY

Well, I uhhh. Don't really- umm. Oh! I don't like movies? (awkward silence) okay, well, anyway
bye.

(MARY exits in an awkward huff)

ARIEL

Is it just me or was that a little bit...

TYLER

Weird?

ARIEL

Yeah. I don't know whatever. She must just be shy.

TYLER

I guess so. Well, I have class so I'll see you later! (TYLER exits)

ARIEL

And that was it. We didn't talk to her again for a few days and she didn't talk to us. And then on
Thursday, Tyler came up to my locker after school. Mary was grabbing her stuff.

(MARY and TYLER enter)

TYLER

Hey I was just wonderi-

(a smell hits his nose and he makes a face)

ARIEL

(confused) What's that face for?

TYLER

Do you smell that? It smells like, really bad. Like major BO.

ARIEL

Ya know I've been smelling that all week by my locker too! I was gonna ask the janitor if it
might be something stuck behind the lockers because it's been getting worse and worse! Do you
know what it is Mary?

MARY

(embarrassed but trying to hide it)

I don't know.

TYLER

It's probably a dead mouse or something.

ARIEL

EWWW!!! Tyler!

TYLER

What? It probably is!

MARY

It's not.

TYLER

Oh? How do you know? (earnestly)

MARY

Those smell way worse.

TYLER

Well what do you think the smell is?

MARY

(realizing she has said too much)

I already said I don't know! Besides, it's not even that bad! (MARY exits)

TYLER

What was that about? I just wanted her opinion.

ARIEL

I don't know. She's just weird I guess. I didn't want to say anything but have you noticed how she wears the same clothes everyday?

TYLER

Really? Her mom must do laundry all the time.

ARIEL

I guess.

TYLER

Well I gotta go, my bus is gonna be here soon. (TYLER exits)

ARIEL

BLUE ROOM VB

My mom was a little late picking me up from school that day. But on our way home I actually saw Mary walking on the sidewalk. She still had her backpack on and everything. We were miles away from school at this point and it must have been like 90 degrees outside. I realized that the smell we were complaining about was actually Mary. I just don't understand why someone would choose to wear the same clothes every day, especially if they had to walk home in the heat like this. I decided that I wanted to do something to help her. So that weekend I had my mom take me to the mall so that I could buy some surprises for Mary.

(ARIEL exits, MARY enters)

MARY

RED BRICK VB

I don't like my new school, but I've never liked any school. I just know nobody there wants to be my friend. And if they knew more about me they definitely wouldn't be my friend. It doesn't help that I'm so tired everyday either. I keep falling asleep in class and people are starting to notice. I just want to become invisible but I don't think it's working.

(MARY exits, ARIEL enters.)

ARIEL

BLUE LOCKERS VB

I made sure I got dropped off at school extra early the next Monday so I could leave my surprise in front of Mary's locker. But when I got there, I saw something. A bunch of other kids must have noticed Mary wearing the same clothes and they decided to be mean about it. People drew really mean stuff all over her locker. "stay home, you smell!" "get new clothes loser" and they left a bunch of sticks of deodorant in front of her locker. I had actually bought her some new clothes and deodorant and perfume, but I didn't have mean intentions, unfortunately, that isn't what it looked like. (MARY enters)

MARY

(sad and angry) Why would you do this?

ARIEL

Mary I swear I didn't have anything to do with that!

MARY

You are literally carrying a bag of deodorant and clothes!

ARIEL

No you don't understand! I saw you walking home last week and thought maybe you could use some new stuff but I didn't know about all of this!

MARY

Yeah right, jerk. All you rich kids are the same. (MARY exits)

ARIEL

Rich kid? I didn't know what she meant. I mean my family had some nice stuff but I didn't think we're rich or anything, I don't know. I still felt bad so I decided to write her a note apologizing for everything. I gave it to her the next day at school.

(MARY enters, shoves note into pocket, unimpressed)

Hey I just wanted to say sorry about yesterday. If I could have seen which kids did that I would have tried to stop them.

MARY

Thanks I guess.

ARIEL

So did you try on any of the clothes or perfume I bought you?

MARY

(offended but trying to hide it)

Nope. Not yet.

ARIEL

Oh okay. (a beat) Well I still want to make it up to you so I was wondering if you wanted to come over to my house after school.

MARY

I can't. I'm busy.

ARIEL

(frustrated) Hey how come you always say no when I invite you places? I am like the only person who has been nice to you, I don't understand why you keep turning me down.

MARY

I'm just busy after school and have to go home right away.

ARIEL

But don't you ever hang out with friends or have fun?

MARY

I already said I am too busy to be your friend so stop trying please.

ARIEL

But I'm only asking becau-

MARY

Seriously I am asking you to stop, nicely.

ARIEL

But-

MARY

(Increasingly frustrated) I said stop.

ARIEL

I just want to help you with your problems!

MARY

I don't need your help! I am so sick of people treating me like some charity case!

ARIEL

But I'm not doing that!

MARY

Yes you are! Maybe you aren't being straight up mean like everyone else but this is still hurtful and frustrating. I get it, I'm poor! I can't hang out with people because I have to watch my younger brother and sister, I walk home because the buses don't stop in my neighborhood, and I wear this shirt every day because it's the last thing my dad gave me before he died. And yeah, maybe you should feel sorry for me, but that doesn't mean you have to keep trying to fix my problems when you have no clue what it's like to be me and grow up where I did. If you really wanted to be my friend, you'd focus more on me as a person and not all these "problems" that you keep asking about! (MARY exits angrily)

ARIEL

I was speechless. I had no idea that Mary had such a hard life and I felt bad for being so nosy. I wanted to help and be friends but I went about it all wrong. I kept trying to “fix” what I thought was wrong when I should have been focusing on just being kind first. I was treating Mary like a charity case and I didn’t even realize it. Mary didn’t talk to me again after that and transferred schools soon. This story doesn’t have the happiest ending, and looking back I would have done things a lot differently. But now I recognize that not everyone has had the same experiences of home life as me, and that’s okay. Since then I have worked on being more open minded and understanding and it has helped me be a better friend and person.

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SPECIAL NEEDS

PINK WALL VB

LOLA

So growing up, I have always had a really hard time in school. I could never read as fast as everyone else and homework took me forever. And I did everything I could to avoid reading out loud in class. I tried to keep it a secret but I have dyslexia. That just means reading is a bit harder for me. Obviously my parents knew and my teachers knew too. I got different tests from everyone else sometimes and didn’t have to write long papers either. But this past year, everyone discovered my secret. Tyler and I had English class together and we had a paper due. I only had to write a two page paper while everyone else had to do a four page paper. One time after school me, Tyler and Ariel were hanging out. I accidentally grabbed his paper and he accidentally grabbed mine and they were due the next day. I was sick the next day and missed school.

(TYLER enters) I got this text that night

SPLIT SCREEN WOOD WALL/PINK WALL

TYLER

Hey Lola. So we accidentally swapped papers yesterday. It isn’t a big deal to me but when I went to turn it in the teacher realized it was yours and was confused for a second. Everyone else in class noticed that it was two pages and complained that I got to turn in less. The teacher then explained that it was yours. She didn’t say anything else but now people are spreading rumors about you and saying some mean stuff. Just thought I’d let you know. Hope you get well soon.

(TYLER exits)

LOLA

I couldn't believe it. I'd managed to keep this a secret for so long and one stupid paper ruins it all for me. I called Ariel because she always knows what to do and gives good advice. (ARIEL enters)

ARIEL

SPLIT SCREEN PINK WALL/BLUE WALL VB

Hello?

LOLA

Hey! So ummm, how was school today?

ARIEL

I know why you're calling Lola.

LOLA

Okay well what should I do?

ARIEL

I mean it's just rumors that people are making up.

LOLA

Well what are they saying?

ARIEL

Some people are just saying you're dumb and lazy. A few people are saying you have a learning disability but just ignore them.

LOLA

Uh-uh.

ARIEL

Hey what's up?

LOLA

(sighs) So the truth is that I actually have dyslexia. I've kept it a secret because I am embarrassed but now it seems like people are gonna find out and I don't know what to do.

ARIEL

I am so sorry Lola I had no idea.

LOLA

I'm sorry I kept it a secret from you and Tyler.

ARIEL

It's okay you don't have to apologize for that. And don't worry about any of the bullies at school, Tyler and I have got your back!

LOLA

It's so nice that I can always count on you two.

ARIEL

Of course! We're your two best friends after all! (ARIEL exits)

LOLA

I was still sick so I missed school again. It didn't help that I was anxious about what people might be saying about me behind my back. I know Ariel and Tyler have my back but I still wish I was there to defend myself. After school, I FaceTimed them. (ARIEL and TYLER enter)

LOLA

OUTSIDE SCHOOL-TRACK VB/PINK WALL VB

Hey guys!

ARIEL

Hey.

TYLER

Hi.

LOLA

So what were people saying today?

ARIEL

Same stuff as yesterday, we would tell people to mind their own business, and imagine if people were saying that about them, but it didn't help too much sadly.

TYLER

People can be such jerks.

ARIEL

Also I told Tyler what you told me yesterday. Sorry if you weren't okay with that.

LOLA

It's okay. I know I can trust both of you.

TYLER

Always. And don't worry, we've always got your back!

ARIEL

100%!

LOLA

Thanks! I am feeling better so I should be in school tomorrow!

ARIEL

Yay, we missed you!

LOLA

It'll be good to be back but I'm nervous about seeing everyone.

ARIEL

It'll be okay. If anything gets too out of hand, we can always report it! Anyway, I have to go home for dinner.

TYLER

I've gotta go too. And Lola, if you ever need help with homework or anything we are always here for you. (TYLER and ARIEL exit)

LOLA

PINK WALL VB

It was nice to talk to them and I know they have good intentions, but what Tyler said made me a little sad. I mean I get good grades, better grades than him a lot of the time. I don't want my dyslexia to make people treat me differently but I thought it might be too late for that.

BLUE LOCKERS VB

The next day I went to school and it was not fun. People kept staring, snickering and laughing. Other people made hurtful comments in passing.

ARIEL

(OS as random voice) Watch out for the slow girl.

TYLER

(OS as random voice) *cough* RETARD *cough* *cough*

LOLA

I stood up for myself when I felt confident enough. Having Ariel and Tyler by my side helped

me as well but it was still hard. At the end of the day I decided to report some of what I had heard. I didn't expect or really want the school to do anything yet I just wanted to make them aware of what was happening so they could keep an eye on it. My dyslexia might make me slow down and take my time on homework, or make me seem like I'm not normal, but I don't care. I still manage to get good grades and be happy about who I am. If other people don't feel good enough about themselves and try to take it out on me, that's their business. But I won't let that bring me down any more than it has.

(ARIEL and TYLER enter)

And having these two definitely makes that easier. I eventually talked to Tyler about what he had said about helping me with my homework and he apologized. I know he didn't mean anything by it, but I just wanted to let him know. I even wrote a full length article in the school paper about dyslexia, and other disabilities- about the fact that someone's disability is not the only thing that defines them. Some people were still mean from time to time but I was able to ignore it, and for the most part, people were accepting and understanding. I was so scared of people knowing my secret, but it turns out being honest and talking about it was the best thing to do the whole time.

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RACISM AND BIAS

HALLWAY VB

(ARIEL, TYLER and LOLA enter in that order)

ARIEL

If you can't tell, the three of us are best friends.

LOLA

Ariel and I have been friends since we were little kids.

TYLER

But I only met these two last year. Last year I was new at this school

ARIEL

Lola and I became friends with Tyler pretty quickly.

TYLER

It was quick for sure, but it wasn't perfect. (ARIEL and LOLA exit) When I was new here I faced a lot of problems. I was the new kid which is hard, but I was also one of the few black kids at school. At first I didn't have any problems with bullies, Ariel and Lola were becoming friends with me and I was doing good in my classes! It looked like I was going to make honor roll! But

about a month into school, things started to change. (TYLER exits. ARIEL and LOLA enter)

ARIEL

Lola and I had study hall together that year. I remember one time we overheard other people saying some.... Bad stuff about Tyler. We didn't know what to do.

LOLA

We figured that maybe we were just mishearing or heard it out of context. I mean some of the people saying this stuff were our friends and had never done or said anything like that before. So we didn't end up doing anything.

ARIEL

I wish we would've though. Maybe we could have stopped what happened next.

(ARIEL and LOLA exit, TYLER enters)

TYLER

BLUE LOCKERS VB

At the end of the day I was grabbing some books from my locker when I noticed a bunch of slips of paper had been stuffed into my locker. They were notes saying: "You don't belong here" "go back to Africa" and other stuff that I can't even repeat. I had been making friends and having such a good time at this school, but I guess I was wrong about everyone. I ended up skipping school for the rest of the week. I didn't want to be at school if the people there didn't want me.

(TYLER exits. ARIEL and LOLA enter)

ARIEL

We didn't see Tyler for the rest of the week. We tried texting him but he wouldn't answer.

LOLA

And the notes didn't stop either. They were practically overflowing out of his locker. We reported them but the school said they needed to hear from Tyler before they could move forward.

ARIEL

HALLWAY VB

We finally saw Tyler again the following Monday. (TYLER enters)

TYLER

Oh, hey.

LOLA

How are you doing?

TYLER

I mean, not great.

ARIEL

We just wanted to let you know that we reported all those notes.

TYLER

What!?! Why would you do that? I already had a target on my back, now it's just gonna get worse! Thanks a lot!

LOLA

Oh but we just...

TYLER

Look, you should both just leave me alone! I don't need your help! (ARIEL and LOLA exit) I got called down to the office later that day. They asked me to give more details about what was going on. Who was doing it, what they wrote, stuff like that. I didn't want to make a big deal about this and just wanted to leave it behind. So I kept quiet about everything. But still things got worse. Other kids started spreading rumors about me, the worst was when they convinced half the school that I didn't have a dad just because my mom was the one who picked me up from school most days. Rumors that I had to move schools because I got in trouble for being a part of a gang at my old school. None of it was true, but no one would believe me besides Ariel and Lola. But they were still upset that I blew up at them earlier so they weren't talking to me. I felt so alone. (TYLER exits. ARIEL and LOLA enter)

LOLA

We wanted to help.

ARIEL

But we didn't know how.

LOLA

And Tyler clearly didn't want to talk to us so we couldn't ask him how to help.

ARIEL

But we did what we could. We tried telling everyone that those rumors were made up and that Tyler was a really great guy.

LOLA

And we reported what we could, but the school could only do so much.

ARIEL

I felt so bad. Tyler was getting bullied and targeted because of the color of his skin. He didn't deserve to face all this racism. No one does.

LOLA

And I could tell it was affecting him. He tried to play it off like it was no big deal, but he was missing more school, he was anxious all the time, and he was forgetting to turn in homework too.

ARIEL

It was hard watching our friend struggle. (TYLER enters)

LOLA

Eventually we convinced Tyler to talk to the counselor about everything going on.
(ARIEL and LOLA exit)

TYLER

I talked to the counselor and she told me that she was sorry that this was happening to me. It was nice to get this off of my chest. I then decided that I would report everything that has happened. I met with the principal and was assured that she would take care of it. I was feeling good, but the next day I got cornered by a group of kids in the grade above me. They said that I was a "snitch" and said they were going to teach me what happens to snitches. They beat me up and called me all kinds of nasty names. I reported it as soon as I could. I ended up skipping school for the rest of the week again. I was scared of what would happen to me. (ARIEL and LOLA enter) Ariel and Lola were nice enough to bring me any homework (ARIEL hands homework) I was missing. It was also nice to have some friends to hang out with too.

LOLA

We kept sticking up for Tyler even though he wasn't at school.

ARIEL

We also got more support. It turns out a lot of people didn't like how Tyler was getting treated, but they didn't know how to help.

LOLA

Or they were scared of getting picked on themselves. But we came together and started an anti-racism club at school. And all the bullies picking on Tyler got in trouble for what they did.

TYLER

I came back to school and it was amazing to see so many people who were supporting me now. I finally felt safe again, and I even made honor roll.

ARIEL

We began talking about things like bias or, how we sometimes are mean to certain people for no reason, and how to be a proper ally.

LOLA

We found it hard to stand up for what was right individually.

ARIEL

But when we stand up as a group-

TYLER

We found we can accomplish anything we set our mind to. And our school is a much more inclusive and kind place as a result.

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OUTRO

GREY BRICK VB

ARIEL

Looking back at everything we've been through as friends.

TYLER

We have had a lot of problems come our way.

LOLA

And we struggled with a lot of it.

ARIEL

But we stuck together, and helped each other out when we could.

TYLER

We learned a lot.

LOLA

And we hope you learned something too.

ARIEL

But the conversation doesn't stop here. Keep discussing these topics.

TYLER

Together, we can make our communities better.

LOLA

But it takes time and effort, and choosing kindness, patience and understanding.

ARIEL

Even if it might be hard. It is definitely worth it. Thanks for listening.