



# Q2

True or False?

Having good  
**Mental  
Health**  
means having  
**control**

over your emotions.

See answer on page 9

# Laura's story

*a journey through adversity*

The police found the woman in the street, naked, drunk and belligerent, and arrested her for public indecency and assault on a police officer.

The little girl watched, guardedly, from the front yard of her condemned Fargo home as the officers guided her mother into a squad car. It wasn't the first time. In fact, it was just another one of dozens of times she'd already watched her mom in an intoxicated rage, screaming and flailing at strangers. She yelled at the little girl, too, mean, hurtful things. And the words were never the worst part.

The little girl's name was Laura. She was four years old.

As the police cruiser pulled away, Laura wondered what would happen next. It's what she always wondered, even on a good day, because throughout her short life she'd never known what the next moment would bring.

## **Trauma's Toll**

A man she'd never met took Laura into the house to get some things. As they walked through the living room, he noticed drug paraphernalia on the coffee table, beer cans and other trash strewn about and a TV with a crack that ran crookedly from corner to corner.

No bed in Laura's room, just a few blankets and a pillow with no case. The man asked if she had a special toy to bring; she looked at him blankly without a word.

*\*\*Names and identifying information have been altered to protect the confidentiality of the client.*

By the time Laura met an Abound counselor, she hadn't spoken in more than a month. She had night terrors and jerked away violently when touched. Her foster parents and daycare providers believed she was developmentally delayed.

### Pictures and Words

The Abound counselor started slowly, not forcing anything. She and Laura played outside and colored together; the little girl's play was aggressive and the art was violent. Laura cried at the end of every session.

Yet she progressed. Speaking was obviously an issue, but because Laura was at the center of the approach, it was up to her when the talking would begin. As it turned out, the right time was the 10th session. The counselor helped Laura begin her trauma story, which is a book about the happy and scary times she experienced.

There had been no baths, no meals prepared, no books read. Often, as she slept on the hard floor, she heard her mother with men who paid for sex. She'd been told to call them "uncles."

As the story unfolded, so did Laura. To address the secondary trauma of being separated from her mother, the counselor began incorporating safe meetings with caring adults in Laura's life, such as foster parents, child protection workers and educators.

### A New Narrative

Little by little, Laura has begun a new story. She talks more, both in and out of therapy. She sleeps better and is finally connecting with her foster parents. And in kindergarten she was reading at a 3rd grade level, so Laura's teacher has referred her to a gifted and talented program for the 1st grade.

Laura's isn't a fairytale story but it is proof that healing and hope are possible with help.



*Drawing by an elementary age child receiving care through Abound Counseling*