

Family & Children's

SERVICE OF ITHACA

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December 21, 2022

Dear Friends,

You made all the difference for Anne and Tyler*.

When lockdown closed Tyler's school and forced him to remain at home, Anne noticed something changing about her son. At first, she thought it was something he would shake off, but as school continued remotely for the remainder of 2020, and into 2021, it became increasingly clear that Tyler was struggling with something he couldn't articulate to her.

Tyler was spending all day on his laptop for class, and then all evening on his phone or computer. Anne trusted Tyler—they'd had conversations about online safety—but it was alarming just how much time he was spending jumping between Snapchat, TikTok and Instagram. He talked to her less and less, and the longer he spent on his devices the more sullen he became. She wanted to take away his phone—to have a technology time-out—but she also knew that doing so would take away one of his last tools for staying connected with friends.

Anne hoped that getting back to school and seeing his friends in person would help, but even after school resumed, Tyler seemed to be retreating further and further into a shell. He lost interest in things he used to enjoy doing, and changed from being outgoing to someone who didn't want to try new things. Anne asked him if he was being bullied, but he said he wasn't.

Then there was an incident at Tyler's school in which another student was suspended after making an online threat. The next day, when Tyler was getting ready to leave the house, Anne found him standing in front of the door hyperventilating. Anne was able to recognize the symptoms of what was likely a panic attack and tried to comfort Tyler. When he calmed down, Anne asked if this had ever happened before, and Tyler confessed that it had a few times, though the other times hadn't been so bad.

Anne was dumbstruck—she had no idea he'd been dealing with something like that on his own. Anne kept Tyler home from school, and spent the day talking to him and to his school counselor and teachers, looking things up online, and feeling shame and guilt for not noticing how much her son was struggling. His school counselor suggested she get him in to see someone at Family & Children's Service of Ithaca as soon as possible, so she gave us a call.

Thanks to your gift last year, Tyler was able to find a therapist at F&CS to talk to. They focused on what had happened that day, and soon began talking about 'doom-scrolling,' about hyper-consumption of media, and more broadly, his anxieties about the general world. He was

scared about climate change, he was scared about school shootings that he saw on the news, about political polarization, even about his mom's finances and how he would afford to go to college in a few years.

Tyler and his therapist started working on identifying triggers of his anxiety, and how to manage those triggers through cognitive behavioral therapy. Tyler's therapist taught him coping mechanisms and grounding exercises to use when he started to feel his anxiety taking over, and they talked about important behavioral changes, like getting lots of sleep, regular exercise, and reducing his sugar and caffeine intake, and how to recognize when he was sinking into a social media trap that might trigger his anxiety.

Your gift of \$[Amount] can help people like Tyler face the complex and often overwhelming world we live in today, and can give kids the tools they need to succeed. Your gift can help a family process trauma, support someone struggling through depression, and equip those we love with the skills they need to cope to prevent tragedies.

Tyler still struggles from time to time, but now he is armed with a number of tools to help him when he feels overwhelmed. And now he knows that he has people to turn to when it gets too much to manage on his own.

Your gift this year can make all the difference. With your help, F&CS can continue to provide the kind of counseling, psychiatry, and social support services to someone like Tyler. Thank you for making a difference.

Sincerely,



Alicia Kenaley
Executive Director

P.S. Access to this kind of mental health care can change the course of someone's life. Renewing your support with a gift of \$[Amount] to F&CS can help people like Tyler find a path forward. Thank you for contributing to the recovery and mental wellness of our entire community.