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Grade 12

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I am driven by the desire to transform personal struggle into purpose.

In middle school, my goal was simply to endure each day. Every morning felt like searching for light in a room with all the windows closed. I struggled intensely with my mental health, and the things that once defined me slowly disappeared: curiosity, ambition, and straight-A report cards. My grades dropped from all A's to all F's. For a long time, I believed I couldn't attend college, graduate high school, or even make it to senior year. The future felt like a place meant for other people.

With the support of therapy and compassionate school counselors, I slowly began to find my footing again. Together, we created a plan centered on what I needed as a person, not just as a student. A hybrid schedule allowed me to focus on both school and healing. Step by step, my grades improved, but more importantly, my perspective began to shift. For the first time in years, I allowed myself to believe that I might graduate.

Looking back, that experience revealed how powerful systems can be when they are designed around real human needs. When my education adapted to how I learned and recovered, progress became possible. That realization sparked my interest in

Human Experience Design and Interaction, a major at Utah State University focused on understanding people and creating tools that make life easier to navigate.

When I entered high school, I carried that fragile hope with me. I was back on track academically and beginning to imagine a future for myself. But near the end of my sophomore year, my life changed again when my brother died by suicide. Grief arrived as a storm of sadness, guilt, confusion, and anger tangled together. I was left with questions that had no answers and conversations that would never happen. I didn't know how to navigate the weight of that loss.

In the darkest moments, I turned to art.

Art became a way to process what words couldn't express. During my junior year, I created an AP Art portfolio centered on grief, exploring the complicated and often unspoken emotions that come with losing someone you love. Through this process, I discovered the power of creativity as a form of problem-solving.

What once drove me was survival. Now, as a senior preparing to graduate and attend college, I am driven to innovate, explore complex problems through creativity, and design experiences that help people feel understood. By studying Human Experience Design and Interaction, I hope to combine empathy, technology, and design thinking to create tools that support people through difficult moments. I cannot change the roads that brought me here, but I can decide where they lead. My experiences have shaped who I am, and now they drive me to design a future where creativity and compassion improve how people experience the world.