

Presentation by Malia McMahon at the Rotary Club of Surfers Sunrise

07 July 2021

INTRODUCTION

Good morning everybody! Firstly, let me begin by thanking District 9640 and Surfers Sunrise Rotary for giving me this opportunity - for an amazing experience, known as RYPEN 2021.

My name is Malia McMahon & I'd like to share some interesting facts about me....let's hope you think they're interesting!

- I share my house with 9 living creatures – three of which listen to my commands, but only 2 of them are pets!
- At age 14, I am nearly 6 feet tall.....and still growing, unfortunately!
- My favourite food is pasta. My favourite snack is cheese. Put them together & I'm your best friend for life.
- I don't sleep – I hibernate! I once slept for 18 hours straight.

BEFORE RYPEN

- **Just another camp**

I thought RYPEN was going to be just like a previous camp I'd been on – boring, everyone was in cliques, non-inclusive people, judgemental & not open to new ideas from others outside of their groups. But I decided to give it a go anyway!

- **Natural Leader**

I've been a natural leader in life – I enjoy seeing others strive for excellence even sometimes before my own... I encourage others to be their best self... I don't necessarily need to be in the limelight but happy to be in the background, knowing that my contribution is still valid. I've developed my leadership skills as a Surf Lifesaver,... school house council representative,... school forum meetings & sports captain... In fact, most of my leadership roles has been not through my skill set but my natural desire for others to succeed.

- **Depression**

In a house of 4 siblings,... I've certainly learnt to wait my turn but boy, can we all be stubborn. I sometimes get easily frustrated & I don't ever try to change my wellbeing and self-worth to fit the criteria of others... COVID-19 lockdown in 2020 was one of the hardest things I've probably ever experience... I experienced loneliness,... frustration,... anger, ...tears ... and for the first time in my life....a form of depression.... I had no motivation to accomplish anything, like usual though I wanted to sleep all day, as I looked forward to going to sleep, dreaming and escaping reality.... I didn't let others around me be known of this. I later took back control of my life as I realised I no longer wanted to feel that way.... I started trying hard to motivate myself to take charge of my life once again, by doing stuff like forcing myself out of the house, complete school assignments, and even just small... simple things.

During RYPEN

During the camp there were multiple motivational speakers,... but one that really stood out was a guy talking about mental health and the effect it had on his dad. I don't remember his name, but I remember his story. He started off by telling how his dad suffered from mental illness, and unfortunately wasn't able to escape its clutch, and later on committed suicide.... Although despite losing his father, he, later on, decided to create a program called... "Breaking free"... Breaking free is a program to help people of all ages, as mental illness can affect anyone, to understand the early signs and symptoms of mental illnesses and 6 ways to overcome them... He was able to bring light to those in need..... I identified with his story, as he explained how it consumes people. It was quite interesting when he talked about how humans have not yet evolved past the hunter/gatherer life. He explained how over the course of millions of years, the human species have survived through the hunter/gatherer lifestyle, only to then all of a sudden change in the past few hundred years. With humans no longer going to sleep when the sunsets and waking up as it rises, no longer being outdoors 6 to 12 hours a day, or even searching and hunting to work for your own food. Instead, nowadays we're; sleeping 3-8 hours..... (during school week's I barely get enough sleep to last the day, usually getting roughly 4 or 5 hours of sleep, and the majority of the weekends volunteering at the beach),..... instead we're indoors crouching over our screens, and even just ducking down to the shop for a measly bag of chips. ... This one guy had such an impact on me.... and many others, I've tried the best I can to help others and create more empathy within myself.... I still carry his wristband with me every day as a reminder. After witnessing these speakers and their stories it was easy to tell this was not just another camp.

Over the course of this camp, the teamwork and trust that was built was astonishing. By the end of the camp, the people we only met a few beforehand, we were all so comfortable with each other. As we were all sharing, laughing, helping, and were just genuinely having conversations with each other.

DAY 1

Let me just start by letting you all know, the way the camp leaders called us into the hall was by blasting the song... "Right Type Of Mood"... and trying to get us all dancing and singing along. During the first day we all just kind of brushed them off and were all just standing awkwardly. Now during day one, the camp leaders wanted us to start by creating some kind of bond with each other. They started the day by giving us all little card sheets, and making us go around and find the people who relate to the statement,.... eg. Find someone with the same amount of siblings as you, ...or find someone who's vegetarian....We weren't allowed to write the same name twice, to encourage us to break from our little bubbles. The girls were on one side of the courtyard, just having small talk and a few giggles. Whilst the boys were all the way on the other side, just messing around....My competitiveness showed right from the start of the camp as I wanted to be the first to complete my little card. I grabbed my friend Bella, and marched over to the other side of the courtyard, in order to do so....Not long after, the others soon followed. Of course,... I did complete my card first, but it was also interesting to find out small, and unusual details about the others. Throughout the rest of the day, we all just simply spent the day getting to know more about each other and listen to all different kinds of speakers, who all contributed to enhancing our bonds with one another.

DAY 2

By the time day two came along we were all still kind of stiff and weren't comfortable with one another.

- Awkward moments
- Trust hadn't been fully established

But the moment I realised this had changed was at the end of day 2

- Sharing items – toothpaste, shampoo, hairbrushes – just like a family
- Harmonious
- How I realised that my first judgements would not be my last – I had changed my mind about my first impressions of some people – now, when I meet new people I will keep an open mind and give them a chance...just as I would hope this would be returned to me.

DAY 3

- Bird types
- What I learnt – about myself & others
- Dry weet-bix – eating it dry – never! But for my team – absolutely!
- Apple covered with vegemite – took one for the team – wanted to win...did win!
- We had become a tribe – what was awkward on the first day (dancing, singing, moving) had become the NORM
- Acceptance – powerful – non-acceptance can lead others to despair & I never want to see anyone feel this way
- For the parents to drop us off seeing this group which now had its own set of norms
- We were setting the energy in the room – can you imagine what we could do in other settings with this type of positivity
- Within 3 days we went from strangers to family

AFTER RYPEN

What did I get from this amazing opportunity?

New level of confidence

- Be more open
- Be more myself – my true self
- More trusting of others

Teamwork to the max

- Helped me to feel, understand and talk about and realise that I'm not alone
- I am a complex person – and that's more than OK
- There is no one else like me
- I want to make something of my life
- From that three days together were all still talking and interacting with each other – I've made friends for life

Plans for the future

- Proactive rather than reactive – Make my life happen
- Look for more leadership opportunities
- Continue giving back to the community – lifesaving (bronze, silver & become a patrol captain, IRB...)
- RYLA

Once again I would like to thank you all for the wonderful opportunity you gave me to discover a better me through RYPEN.

Are there any questions you would like to ask....

Again I like to sayTHANK YOU