



REAGAN LAYMANCE

FOR SANTA FE HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR, REAGAN LAYMANCE, THE ROAD TO MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALING HAS BEEN LONG AND CHALLENGING.

During her junior year, Reagan experienced a series of high-stress and traumatic events that soon began to overwhelm her.

“It was just a lot to deal with all at once,” Reagan remembers. “I couldn’t figure out how to handle all the emotions.”

Chief among these traumatic events was the loss of her best friend in April of her junior year. While the friend had dealt with mental health issues previously, everyone thought she was doing better, so the teen’s suicide was as unexpected as it was tragic.

Although Reagan knew she wasn’t to blame, she still wrestled with guilt, wondering if there was something she could have done to prevent the tragedy.

Also during this time, Reagan quit playing softball—a sport that had long been an emotional outlet for her. A difficult team dynamic had drained her love for the game, leaving her without an anchor she had relied on for years.

Another major stressor in Reagan’s life at that time was being in a toxic, abusive relationship. From harassing phone calls in the middle of the night to a public, physical altercation, the relationship robbed Reagan of her feelings of self-worth and eventually pushed her past her breaking point.

Adding to the stress was a series of bomb threats and lockdowns at school. It was hard to feel safe in the school environment, which presented daily trauma.

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As one stressor after another piled up, the weight of it all began to show in Reagan’s personality. Before this time, she had been an outgoing and happy person, someone her friends and family would describe as “giggly.” She loved going out and having fun with her friends, but slowly that bubbly personality began to fade.

One day at school, a teacher noticed Reagan hadn’t been acting like her normal self for a while.

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“The teacher pulled me out into the hallway and talked to me, and that’s when I finally broke down,” Reagan says. “I told myself I needed to tell my mom everything that was going on and how I was feeling.”

That afternoon, Reagan went home and cried to her mom, apologizing for the way she had been acting.

“She didn’t ask any questions,” Reagan remembers of her mom, Milissa’s, reaction. “She got right to researching therapists and asking for advice.”

Reagan’s desire to reach out for help was a welcome development for Milissa, who had noticed the changes in her daughter’s personality and behavior.

“I saw that she was making decisions she knew were wrong and steering herself in the wrong direction,” Milissa recalls. “But the more we tried talking to her about it, it seemed to get worse, and she would shut down.”

Milissa found Illuminated Pathways Family Therapy, LLC through a referral from a trusted friend. She visited their website and was drawn to the views, morals, and values that make up Illuminated Pathways’s faith-based, Christ-centered treatment approach.

“I believe there is a foundational truth to everything,” says Rhonda Velders, LPC-S, AAT, owner of Illuminated Pathways. “And I believe that everyone has a chance to restore their life and bring it back to God’s original design.”

With support from her family, Reagan took the first step towards healing.

THE JOURNEY

By meeting regularly with Rhonda, Reagan began to learn techniques and strategies to help her cope with the moments of anxiety and stress in her life.

“I started coming to Illuminated Pathways to figure out how I could make myself healthier, for myself and for everyone else around me,” Reagan admits.

One of the strategies Reagan has found most helpful is the 5 Sense Method, also called the 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique.

Rhonda explains this technique is often taught to clients who have experienced trauma, providing them with a tool to help them regulate their emotions. It involves identifying things in the person’s immediate surroundings that stimulate each of the five senses in order to ground the individual and bring their attention back to the present moment.

5-4-3-2-1 GROUNDING

- 5 things I can **SEE**
- 4 things I can **TOUCH**
- 3 things I can **HEAR**
- 2 things I can **SMELL**
- 1 thing I can **TASTE**

Reagan has also found writing in a journal to be very helpful. “When I find myself having negative thoughts, I go in my journal and just write about it. And then I write about why I’m being negative and what I can do to shift my thinking.”

One of Reagan’s biggest challenges in her healing journey has been learning to set boundaries in her relationships. She came to recognize that allowing people to “walk all over her” was taking a serious toll on her mental health.

As a result, Reagan found the courage to leave the abusive relationship she had been in. “I now realize that I’m worth far more than I thought I was,” Reagan proudly admits.

Reagan also admits the importance of Scripture and of depending on the Lord for her healing. Verses such as Jeremiah 29:11—“For I know the plans that I have for you,” says Yahweh, “plans for peace, and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (World English Translation)—have served as a strong reminder that Jesus is always with her and she should put her worries and concerns in His hands and trust Him.

Over time, these tools began to make a visible difference.

THE HEALING

Reagan is happy to say she can see many changes in herself since she began therapy at Illuminated Pathways.

“I wouldn’t say I’m completely back to my old self,” Reagan admits, “but I’m definitely happier than I was. Rhonda has really helped me believe in myself and know that I’ve got this.”

And the changes are evident to others who have been on this journey with her.

“Reagan has learned how to advocate for herself respectfully, and that was a big thing,” Rhonda acknowledges. “I really feel like she has found her voice.”

“She is sticking up for her personal boundaries and not giving in to peer pressure,” Milissa has noticed. “There is a lot less drama in her friend circle since she has made some changes in her choice of friends. Overall, she’s a happier person.”

One of the things Reagan found most challenging about her healing journey was learning to believe in herself.

“At first, I didn’t think things would get better or easier. I was in such a dark place for such a long time that I thought I was going to be that way forever.”

But now Reagan has hope.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Not only does Reagan have hope, she also has great plans for her life. She plans to become a nurse, hoping to one day be accepted to A&M University after attending College of the Mainland for her foundational coursework. She would like to work in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit before eventually getting her master’s degree and becoming an anesthesiologist.

“I just love helping people,” Reagan says. “I love caring for people and making them feel better.”

“I am so proud of how far Reagan has come,” Milissa says. “I love that my daughter is back to herself!”

Rhonda is also very proud of Reagan and the progress she has made. “Reagan has learned how to assert herself and stand strong. People aren’t meant to stay in therapy forever once they are given tools for their tool belt for life. The goal is to learn how to use the tools and then go and do life.”

And that is exactly what Reagan is doing—using the tools gained in therapy to move forward with confidence and hope.

**IF YOU’RE READY TO START
YOUR JOURNEY TO
EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND
HEALING, CONTACT US
TODAY.**

ABOUT ILLUMINATED PATHWAYS FAMILY THERAPY, LLC

Illuminated Pathways Family Therapy is a faith-based counseling practice located in the Houston/Nassau Bay area. They focus on helping individuals, couples, and families work through emotional, relational, and life challenges with a Christ-centered approach to healing and growth.

They provide a variety of therapeutic services, including:

- Individual counseling for teens and adults
- Family therapy to support healthy relationships
- Marriage and couples counseling (including premarital)
- Tools and techniques to help clients develop coping skills and emotional regulation.

Their approach is goal-oriented and rooted in Christian faith, with a focus on hope, healing, and restoring emotional and relational health.

Their counseling philosophy combines professional clinical methods with biblically grounded principles, aiming to help clients find direction and peace through both therapeutic tools and spiritual support.



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