



Healthy Me

Aiden's Story - Ages 8-9 - Piece 5

Aiden is 15. As always when Aiden got home from school his mum pestered him with questions. "How was school? What did you learn? Did you make any friends?"

Aiden usually tried to be patient and answer all her questions. But today he wanted to get started on his homework right away so he could go over to his friend Eddie's house later. Aiden wasn't popular at school and got teased a lot for being 'a geek', so he really appreciated Eddie's friendship. Eddie was 18 and they had met four years ago at football, they both supported the same side, and their Dads worked together. Eddie had invited him over that evening to play video games.

Even though Eddie was cool and being Eddie's friend made Aiden kind of cool too, he felt sad for some reason. He didn't know why. Maybe he missed the old Eddie. Eddie had been fourteen and Aiden had been eleven when they first met, so they had both changed a lot in that time.

And there were some other strange things, too, that Aiden couldn't figure out. People at school had started to be afraid of Eddie and his friends? Eddie was great so Aiden couldn't see what the problem was.

ASK: What is Aiden feeling? Why might he be feeling this way?

Aiden was thinking about these things when suddenly his mobile pinged. There was a text from Eddie that said, "Thought you were coming over..." followed by a puzzled face emoji.

"I have to finish my homework first," Aiden texted back.

"Leave it," replied Eddie. "It doesn't matter. I can fake a note for you to hand in to say why you haven't done it. I do it all the time. LOL."

Aiden texted a LOL emoji back, but he wasn't sure if Eddie was joking or not.

"I'll come and pick you up. See you in five" Eddie texted. Eddie was able to borrow his Mum's car and had just passed his driving test.

Aiden left his homework unfinished and ran downstairs. His mum looked up from the magazine she was reading. Aiden went towards the door.

"You can't have finished your homework already?" his mum scolded.

Aiden grunted something back. He knew that he was being rude to his Mum but for some reason he couldn't help it.

"So, did you finish your homework?"

"Yes!" he shouted sarcastically as he slammed the door behind him.

"What about your meal?" she called after him, but he pretended he hadn't heard. He and Eddie would get a take-away, that's what usually happened.

Aiden waited outside for Eddie to pick him up. He heard the car before he saw it, because there was blaring music coming from inside. Aiden noticed that Eddie wasn't alone and he had some of his other friends, Harry and Tamsin in the car. They were all smoking cigarettes. They were also passing a can of beer around between them.

ASK: What might Aiden be feeling now? How do you think Aiden's Mum feels?



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"Hey, Aiden," said Eddie.

Tamsin high-fived him through the open car window, and so did Eddie. Aiden got into the passenger seat. When they drove past Aiden's house, Aiden saw his Mum looking out the window.

"Relax!" said Harry. "What are you worried about?"

Aiden tried to relax but his heart was beating fast. And his face was flushed with a really awful feeling. He knew his Mum would be worried if she saw him driving off with a group of teenagers who were smoking and drinking.

"Here, have some of this," said Eddie and he tossed Aiden an unopened can of beer while holding the steering wheel of the car with one hand. "Try it," said Eddie. "It'll calm you down."

Tamsin passed Aiden a cigarette and reached over with a lighter and lit a flame.

Aiden just held the cigarette, not knowing what to do. He knew smoking was unhealthy but it did seem cool when Eddie and his friends did it.

ASK: What might Aiden be feeling now? What might he be thinking? What could Aiden do? What do you think Eddie and the others are feeling? Are they being helpful to Aiden? Do you think they are being kind or unkind, or a little of both?

"Trust me, it'll be fine," said Eddie.

"Don't be a wuss," said Harry.

Aiden knew that if he thought about it, he would never do it, so he decided not to think. He put the cigarette in his mouth. He wanted to be cool and fit in with Eddie's group. He knew he had to, to be with them. But he felt something inside him slipping away and he tried not to think about it.

He put the cigarette into the flame that Tamsin was holding.

"Take a long breath!" she said.

Aiden took a long breath in on the cigarette and suddenly his throat burned. He coughed and coughed. The smoke stung his eyes.

The others laughed. Harry slapped him on the back.

"Your first cigarette!" Eddie fist-bumped him, still driving one handed.

Aiden smiled even though there were tears coming out of his eyes.

It was horrible but it was good too. Finally, he was 'popular' and no longer a geek.