

Speaker Biographies



At a young age, **Carl Antisell** began using alcohol as a way to mask the shame and pain he felt as a result of his ongoing battle with anxiety and depression. Eventually, this negative coping mechanism spun out of control and into addiction. In his recovery process over the last five years, Carl has learned healthy, effective ways to handle his emotions, as well as life's ups and downs. He views the lessons he continues to learn in recovery as valuable not only for those suffering from substance abuse, but to anyone facing life's challenges. He believes that the feelings that he struggles with are faced by young people everywhere. Carl's answer is to educate young people about mental health issues to lessen the stigma attached to such problems and to empower the youth community to voice their needs, allowing the greater community to build resources to support them. [Read Carl's full biography and see his video by clicking here.](#)



Drew Bergman's early teenage years were filled with tremendous sadness resulting from a severe case of depression. He began to self-harm in middle school and considered suicide. For a brief time, he was able to hide his depression and cutting, continuing to perform as an outstanding athlete and model student. Living two lives intensified his depression. In his sophomore year of high school, Drew attempted suicide for the second time. By the grace of a higher power, he survived. He experienced a turning point in his recovery, and turned his life into one of inspiring others to seek awareness and treatment. His public speaking provides the opportunity to reaffirm his resilience and inner strength. Through this forum, Drew informs others that they are not alone in facing their struggles and that recovery is indeed possible. [Read Drew's full biography and see his video by clicking here.](#)



Beginning when she was a child, **Mariel Harrison** utilized negative coping mechanisms to battle her bi-polar disorder and feelings of insecurity and inferiority. After developing an eating disorder and resorting to self-harm, Mariel spent the majority of her teenage years afflicted with alcohol and drug addiction. Mariel entered recovery in 2007 and has been able to maintain continuous, long-term recovery since then. [Read Mariel's full biography by clicking here.](#)

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In high school, **Jordan Burnham** had everything to live for. He was popular, had good grades, and was a star athlete. Over time, the pressures mounted. During his senior year of high school, Jordan attempted to take his own life by jumping from a ninth-story window. Jordan's miraculous survival propelled him to deal with his depression and learn healthier coping skills. Today, Jordan is a nationally recognized mental health advocate. He has addressed a Congressional briefing on Capitol Hill and participated in the National Conference on Mental Health, hosted by President Obama and Vice President Biden. He has been featured in three documentaries and his piece with ESPN E:60, "Unbreakable" was nominated for an Emmy. Jordan's presentation is meant to inspire, educate, and allow others to know that they're not alone. [Read Jordan's full biography and see his video by clicking here.](#)



From a young age, **Melissa Ann Hopely** knew there was something different about her. Unlike her peers, she was constantly worried and experienced unbearable anxiety that manifested itself physically. As Melissa tried to hide her issues and fit in with her peers, she became a victim of bullying. This reaction caused her to put on a mask, living separate internal and external lives. While in high school, Melissa was diagnosed with depression. After a friend recognized she was struggling and approached her about it, Melissa knew she needed help. Once she accepted her diagnosis of OCD and depression, Melissa realized that she wasn't alone. This inspired her to share her story, which led her to finding a purpose in her life. Today Melissa is an accomplished speaker, author of *The People You Meet In Real Life*, and an anti-bullying advocate. [Read Melissa's full biography and see her video by clicking here.](#)

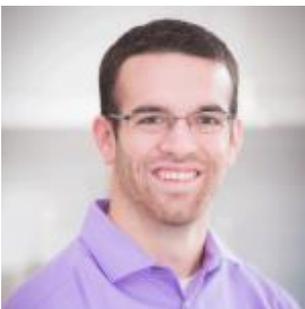


Sports and movement were how **Ali Tomlinson** coped with her chronic anxiety, negative body image issues, and self-loathing. When she was injured in college and unable to play any sports, Ali's mental and physical health suffered as she engaged in restrictive eating and over-exercise in an effort to regain a sense of control. When this behavior led to an emotional crash after college, she committed to recovery, found the right support team, and dove into the practice and daily work of restoring her physical, mental, and emotional health.. [Read Ali's full biography by clicking here.](#)

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When she was 15 years old, **Katya Palsi** was sexually assaulted, leading to a subsequent unhealthy relationship. Unable to process these experiences and feeling too ashamed to share her trauma with those around her, Katya sank deeply into depression, anxiety, and negative coping mechanisms until she finally sought help. Equipped with a degree in advertising, her strong self-esteem, and ongoing mental wellness, Katya now enlightens others about the stigma surrounding mental health issues and healthy relationships. Katya's goal is to inform both males and females about the messages that they receive from society and the media regarding their physical and mental well-being and to educate them about consent, media literacy, and self-care. [Read Katya's full biography and see her video by clicking here.](#)



Andrew Onimus had it all entering his senior year at Muhlenberg College. He was a starting defensive back for the football team, named captain of the track and field team, and already had a full-time position upon graduation with a large accounting firm in Philadelphia. However, an injury in the first game of the season and increasing pressure to perform caused drastic changes for him. Andrew hid his struggles from family and friends as he pretended that everything was fine, until he experienced suicidal ideations and reached a point where he desperately needed help. With a strong support group behind him, Andrew and his family began taking the needed steps toward recovery. The overwhelmingly positive feedback he received inspired him to continue talking about mental health. [Read Andrew's full biography by clicking here.](#)



When she was 16, **Ali Warren Rothrock** became a volunteer firefighter and experienced sexual harassment, sexual assault, and years of bullying at the hands of her fellow firefighters. While struggling to pursue her passion for firefighting, Ali developed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which kept her stuck in the past and prevented her from engaging in life. Through working with a wonderful therapist and surrounding herself with the love and support of family and friends, Ali learned how to take her life back and live it freely. Ali has re-identified herself as a victor instead of a victim. She now lives as a national speaker, author, firefighter, and Emergency Medical Technician, who is passionate about sharing her struggles and encouraging others to persevere through their own challenges. [Read Ali's full biography and see her video by clicking here.](#)

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From an early age, **Sammantha Perrine** was struggling internally with low self-esteem and depression. Because of negative messages about her body and a diagnosis of dyslexia, Sammantha felt very different from her peers as early as elementary school. Most days, Sammantha's mind was consumed with negative thoughts about her weight and food until she felt as if she was literally drowning in her own miserable self-judgements. Through time, treatment, and a great deal of work, she has been able to identify her distorted thought-processes and learn how to combat these beliefs in positive ways. [Read Samm's full biography by clicking here.](#)



Jon Burgwin grew up in a home of high-achievers. In middle school, Jon began to experience anxiety that prevented him from being able to achieve not only the goals set for him by his family, but his own. His attempts to avoid the stress brought on by his anxiety drove him to adopt negative coping skills. After turning to his family for help, and receiving their encouragement, Jon was able to find healthy coping skills that he still uses today to manage his anxiety. [Read Jon's full biography by clicking here.](#)