



r/troubledteens • 5 yr. ago
PrincessMaddie



My story of a hellish stay at Montana Academy

I'm not going to go into the hell that was SUWS Carolina [wilderness], as that is a whole different can of worms, and the boarding school was far more sinister. I arrived at Montana Academy a few weeks after turning 17. I was absolutely terrified after what I had been through spending 9 weeks living in the woods, but I was at least happy that I could use a toilet and sleep in a bed. [To get rid of any confusion later on, I was born male. At this point in my life I was still living as a boy, and trying very hard to convince myself I wanted to stay that way.] When I got to campus I was greeted by my team leaders and paraded through the lunch room as the entire student body looked at me [as all new students are]. I'm still convinced this is a power play devised by the creators of the school to subtly break your guard down. I said goodbye to my mom, grandmother, and my uncle, and began the worst period of my life.

So the Staff of our team was our team leader Dave, and boy, Dave was a piece of shit. He was the type of guy who would get a shit eating grin whenever he could punish you. You could fucking tell he got a semi off of it, and we would all talk about how much we hated him behind his back. I remember the ear to ear smile he got on his face as my eyes welled up with tears when he told me I couldn't spend Christmas away from the ranch with my mom, because I was short by one signature on my checklist. That's Dave in a nutshell. The weekend team leader was Sam and I think he was even worse, because he had the amazing ability to make you feel safe and loved one week, and then emotionally beat you to a pulp the next. For instance... There was one weekend where Sam and I had a long emotional talk where I opened up to him about how much my dad meant to me and how I would give anything to have him back. He gave me the biggest hug and told me he was here for me. The week after was rough and I was so excited to talk to him again, but when his shift started, he sat down and immediately screamed at me in front of everybody for not sitting down fast enough at the table, and put me on privilege freeze for a week. This would happen all the time. It was like he got off on building up our trust and hopes and then he would have a bad week at home and treat us like absolute shit.

I started with every intention of bettering myself. I had fully subscribed to the belief that I was broken as a result of "immaturity", as the Founder of M.A.'s book was so fond of claiming. Despite coming from a broken home, childhood neglect, death of a parent, sexual abuse, trauma etc, it was MY fault that I ended up at M.A. I was ready to do my part. Unfortunately I wasn't perfect as the staff expected me to be. I tried my ass off to do chores to the militaristic standards that they upheld, but I often fell short. Perhaps I missed a nearly microscopic hair in a bathtub. Sometimes, my sheets were a little crooked. And for each little transgression there was a severe consequence. If you made more than one mistake on your chores within a week, you could kiss all of your privileges goodbye. No phone call to your mom. No movie night. This may not seem like a big deal, but when you're locked in an environment where you have maybe one tiny thing to look forward to a week, losing it because of something that is often not your fault is the most heart wrenching feeling in the world. Sometimes the punishments would go beyond cruel and just become abusive. About 5 weeks into my stay, I made the grave mistake of telling my team leader Dave that I had finished my assignment because I was having a really horrible day and just wanted to continue reading my book. Unfortunately he decided to double check. When he found out I wasn't being honest, he assigned me to my first drudgery. That weekend I spent 6 hours outside in 20 degree weather scraping ice off of every single pathway on the entire ranch campus. I asked once if I could stop because my hands were rubbed raw and starting to bleed, and my weekend team leader Sam refused. I shouldn't have lied, he insisted. By the end of the night, my hands were covered in blisters and I had learned my place. At this point I was broken, or so I thought. I didn't know it could get worse.

As for therapy... My 1st therapist was useless. She was liable to cry about tragedies that had occurred during her own life. Ironically she was as cold as ice when it came to my issues. When it came to the issue of me being sexually assaulted in the 1st grade, she breezed right past it, and moved on to other issues. When I told her that I had always wished I had been born a girl, she didn't seem to give the slightest semblance of a fuck. When I would bring up the death of my father, or my mother's alcoholism, she would go into how her brother died and start crying, and the next thing I knew I would be awkwardly wondering if I should console her. The biggest breakthrough in our therapy was when she came to the confident conclusion that the root of all my issues was that I was... wait for it... ADDICTED TO VIDEO GAMES... Every therapy session turned into her trying to convince me that I never wanted to play video games again, despite the fact I was drinking heavily and using substances before

Group therapy was a clusterfuck. I don't exactly know a better way to describe it than to call it "conflict therapy". Seeing as how the entire M.A. operation was based around punishing students for their mistakes it was only natural to pit them against each other. The students of M.A. were each separated into 7 teams of roughly 10 students each. I spent 90% of my time with my team. They were your my friends, but I can guarantee they knew me fucking biblically. During group, it was common for one student on the team to be singled out and for every other student on the team to just fucking lay into them. It happened to everybody. We were all encouraged to tell on each other if we witnessed any rules being broken. I couldn't trust my best friends with a secret at M.A. because the consequences were so dire. One tiny mistake could land me there for an extra year. Imagine the fucking paranoia that this causes. I was ALWAYS being watched. I began to question every single thing that I did. I began to believe the punishments I was being given were because I was useless, and because I couldn't do anything right. After about a year I was 100% fucking brainwashed. I because some kind of M.A. Drone and I genuinely believed that I needed them to survive. It was like I was in a fucking cult, and if they had fucking cyanide in the punch I wouldn't be writing this right now.

I think this next part was the most fucked up. This was the point where my red-pollyped festering cunt of a therapist decided to use me as an example, to teach a fucking seminar. My team was planning a father-son weekend trip. Doesn't that sound lovely? Well, problem is, my dad's fucking brain drowned in its own blood and so he's in a box in my mom's closet, so I can't exactly take that out to Bowman lake with the boys. Luckily for me my therapist called me in and informed me that I was allowed to spend a weekend with my Uncle [who I love very much]. I was so happy, I was jumping for joy! A few weeks pass, and the father-son weekend is getting closer. My therapist calls me back in and tells me to sit down, and then informs me that she actually thinks it would be great for my "therapy" if I went with my team on the trip... I begged her to let me spend the weekend with my uncle, but she said it would also be good for the team's therapy. So that weekend we all went to the lake. It was a really wonderful experience for everybody except for me. For the entire weekend I was alone. Some of my friends and their dads spent some time with me but I honestly wanted to be alone. Being the only kid without a fucking dad on a father-son trip is fucking humiliating beyond words. The worst part was on the last night of the weekend where the therapist held a group therapy session and the whole fucking thing was centered around me and my fucking dead dad, and all the issues that come with having a dead dad. My therapist had some really great and sensitive questions prepared... "Do you miss your dad?" "Do you feel guilty about anything?" "Why do you feel like it was your fault?" "Do you think your dad would be proud of you?" "Do you wish your dad was here?" "How did you deal with your mom falling apart?" "How do you feel that your mom is drinking again?" and the therapist just keeps pushing me and pushing me and pushing me until I'm inconsolable, and having a panic attack, and I just want her to shut the fuck up. I felt so broken, humiliated, and violated. How fucking dare this bitch of a therapist come at me with all of this heavy shit in front of people I've never met, when all she ever wants to talk about in our sessions is how much I like video games. They don't care in these fucking places. They wanted to give these stupid fucking dads something powerful to witness so they could write a fucking Facebook post about the amazing work that's being done at MA. May they rot in hell.

Medical malpractice was also Rampant. While at M.A. I was struggling with weight and eating issues. My team "suggested" that I run a half marathon because our new team leader liked to run and they love to fucking push even the smallest beliefs and hobbies on their students. The shoes I was training in had literally no insoles. I asked for new shoes and was told to write a proposal. I wrote one and was never responded to by the treatment team [big fucking surprise]. After weeks of training we finally ran the half marathon. Halfway through, I felt a shooting pain in my foot. I told my team leader as he was not too far ahead. He didn't give me much of a choice but to finish. For the next 6-8 weeks I asked the nurse every day if I could please go to the doctor as my foot was killing me, and nobody ever did anything about it. Finally after asking over what must have been 50 times, they agreed to let me go into town to get an x-ray. The x-ray found that I had snapped the middle metatarsal bone in my foot clean in half. So not only did M.A. make me run 6 miles with a broken foot, they made me do hard fucking labor on it for 6-8 weeks before allowing medical treatment. Care for Transgender students was disgustingly ignorant and based on lies and misinformation. Despite trying to come out as trans to my 1st M.A. therapist, it was just ignored. I tried multiple times to bring it up, but I'm now certain that my therapist didn't know what a trans person was, and so she just thought it would be easier to switch the subject. When I moved on to the Sky House [the halfway house portion of the program] I said fuck it and just fully came out. This was met with backlash from the therapy team. Since I was at the Sky house now I had a new therapist and he had a lot of info about transitioning. Unfortunately, all of the info was fucking wrong, and he filled my head with misinformation, lies, and half-truths, in an attempt to make it sound like starting hormones was harder than getting a fucking doctorate from Harvard.

fucking unraveling fast. I realized that I had been horribly abused and that the "therapy" I had been undergoing was nothing more than expensive babysitting. I fucking lost it I started drinking and taking any substance I could. I failed out of my school and moved back home. I drifted around for 3 years drinking, and being a disgusting and terrible person. I had to figure it all out on my own. I fucked with drugs I never should have and fell in with people I had no business being with. I drank too much, and made many regrettable decisions. But I still figured my fucking life out. I figured out that I needed to fucking get it together. I made a goal. I needed to transition. That was problem A. I got sober, went to my Nana [my hero] and found a therapist and within 2 weeks I was on hormones and began my transition, and by pure luck, I found love. It's been a little over 4 years since I've gotten sober and things are far from perfect. I have severe PTSD from going to that hell of a school. I still dream about it multiple nights a week, and wake up in a fucking panic. I never leave the goddamn house because I start to panic, and I have serious trouble holding a job, so instead I work from home as a camgirl, inserting large objects into me for money. I'm lucky though that I now have my girlfriend to help me through it. Without her, I don't know what I would do most days. Also, its really fucking great to not have to be a goddamn boy anymore. If anyone else had a similar experience [and I know others have] you're not alone, and good luck.

Edit: Formatting, plus an update in the comments



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 Search Comments**Kevlar83** • 5y ago •

I was at MA from 99-01, holy shit Dave was still there? He was the week leader for team 3. I was in 1 and then part of the inaugural team 5. I remember his grin too! Holy shit all the memories come rushing back...



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**PrincessMaddie** OP • 5y ago •

If it's the same Dave then yeah. He's a fucking loser.



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**PsychologicalInjury2** • 5y ago •

CEDU Ascmt. SumAchvmnt. Mt Acad. SecNatBR. DevGlenhlm. OxAcad.

Does he still have that soul-patch under his lower lip? Plays guitar, I think.



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**Kevlar83** • 5y ago •

I think you are thinking of Dave Wagner, which is the Dave I was thinking about earlier lol



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**[deleted]** • 5y ago •**SurvivorSoul7** • 5y ago •

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PrincessMaddie OP • 5y ago •



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[deleted] • 5y ago •



PrincessMaddie OP • 5y ago •

Update: I should mention that there's no way for me to express all of the atrocities that were committed at Montana Academy while I was there. I left out a lot of details such as social isolation, ghosting, the clan system, the overlooked suicide of a student last year, and even more.

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Anubisrapture • 5y ago •

THE CLAN SYSTEM? Holy crap. And huge punishments for all of one criticizes the total racism inherent in the disgusting name. And ,how traumatizing for you who survived as well; a dead or injured beyond coma fellow inhabitant swept under the rug. So sorry this is within your soul. Remembering that it was beyond your capacity to stop is all we observers of cruelty can do. My respect and my sympathy and hope for better days. 🌸🌻

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PrincessMaddie OP • 5y ago •

Thank you so much for your support

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Cattycake1988 • 5y ago •

I was in Montana Academy from mid Jul 2002 - Oct 2003. Team 5. Am a trans woman too. While I'm sad you had to go through that, I did feel good hearing your tale in that it seems to be one of the least discussed in terms of experiences, and so I sometimes wonder if I just was over exaggerating to myself the struggles of being sent there. Your post was a nice jump start to my brain that what was done there was and is traumatic for others as well.

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PrincessMaddie OP • 5y ago •

Im so sorry you had to experience it. I hope life has made up for it tenfold for you

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ReluctantVegetarian • 5y ago •

Oh Sweetheart, I am so very, very sorry. It is not your fault. It was never your fault. Please remember that nothing in life is a straight line, not even healing. I knew a nurse who said life is like an EKG - the line goes up, the line goes down, it's only flat when you've died.

I wish you love, self-love, and continued healing.

Thank you so much. You are very kind

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 [deleted] • 5y ago •

 [deleted] • 5y ago •

i went to suws carolina too and i still have chronic back pain 5+ years later

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 PrincessMaddie OP • 5y ago •

I'm sorry you had to go through that. Suws was hell

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 kimj0ng-illin • 5y ago •

|| || TTI7 || Section Chief (Mental Health)

I went to Summit Prep in Kalispell, MT, which was like the sibling school to M.A. It's ironic because we were always told how good M.A. kids had it, and the way that our staff made it seem was that it was more of a regular boarding school. I had a few friends from wilderness go there, so I now know how hellish it actually is. Summit was extremely similar to everything you described, am I'm also transgender, but at the time I was only out about being bisexual, which was very frowned upon. My therapist was absolutely terrible too. She had zero social skills and told me that she could relate to addiction because she had smoked a cigarette once.

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 PrincessMaddie OP • 5y ago •

That's funny you say that. We were always told that summit was way nicer ourselves. I'm sorry you had to go through the program as a trans person. Are you MtF, FtM, or Non binary? Just wondering? You've got a friend in me. Best of luck to you.

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 Anubisrapture • 5y ago •

Jeez you guys: the Therapists there didn't seem to know Jack about therapy and WORSE their empathy as human beings =purely trash. Compassion? Nope, none of that life reviving quality either. Not only were the so called leaders of your therapy heartless as f they were lacking any competence. They could not have been more cruel. I'm SO SO sorry.

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 MondaleforPresident • 5y ago •

That sucks. It definately puts a different spin on Kalispell, which to me is memories of my mom and I complaining trying to get a better room at the Hampton Inn but they all smelled bad to one degree or another.

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 SavageKenzo • 5y ago •

 **PrincessMaddie** OP • 5y ago •

It was. It didnt used to be a wwasp as far as I know.

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 **SavageKenzo** • 5y ago •

Damn that's crazy! There's so many of us!

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 **[deleted]** • 5y ago •

I think this place initially was a spin-off from CEDU program employees. I could be wrong, unfortunately the Fornits wiki seems to be dead for good so IDK any other way to check.

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 **fun_struggle** • 5y ago •

That's rough buddy :/ I had a shockingly similar experience though. I was at an all girls program for a couple years between 2018-19 and they had a father/daughter trip that everyone above a certain phase was required to go on. Trouble is my dad died in '15 but they made me go anyways. Like you talked about, I spent most of the time alone and miserable and balancing sticks on top of each other. It was pretty terrible.

I'm also transgender. I was born a girl but sometime in middle school I figured out that I wanted to be a boy. I tried to talk to staff at my program about it and they just laughed at me and said that I would always be a girl.

But yeah, these programs suck. I'm so sorry you had to go through all that, and I can relate a lot, especially to you. Feel free to dm me if you ever want to talk about anything :)

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 **Anubisrapture** • 5y ago •

Hey thank you

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 **hellhoundshawty** • 5y ago •

Wow, thank you so much for sharing your story. I was at a program called Solstice for 15 months and it tore me apart. I'm still trying to recover.

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 **[deleted]** • 2y ago •

I went to MA and was on team three and graduated in 2002.

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 **MokaChiyo** • 2y ago •



+ Create



Even with the small amount they even let the 'Two oPpOsItE gEnDeRs 🙄' interact, I could still see that shit all the way from the other side of campus.

The hypocrisy and the toxicity of that place was just insane.

Somehow I was still left with a love of the outdoors (thankfully) and the beauty of Montana and actual downtown Kalispell...

I'd probably attribute that to the Sky House though, not sure if you ever ended up going there. Also, the sky house is probably what Summit people talked about when they were told Montana Academy people had it good. We used to hang out with summit people sometimes even....

Anyways, I'm so sorry for what you went through. That place SUCKED



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Sagewalker90 • 1y ago •

I'm a team 6 member. Graduated in December of 2008

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[deleted] • 2y ago •

I was at MA till 2002ish. I was on Team 3 as well. I know this is an old thread.

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