

The Secret to Success!

Graeme Dingle Foundation staff member Adi Cummings turned her back on a corporate role to help the youth of Aotearoa and is now part of the Programme Development team who develop the high-quality programmes of the Foundation. This is her inspiring story...

Adi 's first experience as a mentor was at a Graeme Dingle Foundation event where she met Skye (not her real name), her first mentee. Her recollection is of "a 14-year-old girl decked out in a leopard-print top, heavy make-up standing in a room with other Project K students. Her hair covered her eyes and she looked slightly nervous."

A few months before, Adi, stood on the 20th floor of her office building gazing out at Ponsonby and Rangitoto Island. To look at her, she was a picture of success, however she felt empty. "There must be more I could do or give to others", she thought.

Her job kept her busy, but she didn't feel the passion. She thought about what she could do in the community as she really enjoyed connecting with people and making things happen. It was then she decided to sign up for a Project K mentor training course to learn how to mentor and help a young person. Adi joined the Foundation with a view to make a difference.

Adi could see that mentoring Skye would help her grow. However, she didn't expect she would grow alongside Skye as well. Despite their differences they had a lot in common, aside from the leopard print. Both were Westies from West Auckland. The music. People. Creativity. Freedom.

Adi also knew what it felt like to be depressed and to lack self-confidence. Looking at Skye she saw some of her own traits and could relate well with her, knowing she could help bring about change.

"Once you decide to do something like this – something happens. You put yourself out there, you want to give back... There is something powerful and special about giving. People come into your path and things happen."

They set goals and went to different places together. Skye began to open up and share personal things with Adi and speak a lot about



herself. There were comments such as, "I could never do that," or "I just don't feel confident doing that." Adi was there to gently encourage her that she could.

There were things that made Adi want to cry. Sometimes when driving or walking, Skye would talk and share her thoughts and feelings. Adi just listened - every young person needs to be heard and listened to.

After completing the 14-month programme Skye graduated at the Project K graduation ceremony. Her hair was off her face and it was no longer dark and shadowed. It was light.

She decided to stay on at school and now believed she could do things and that she had hope for the future.

Adi celebrated Skye's 21st and they are still in touch today.

Now in her dream job working for the Foundation, Adi is passionate, and her work makes her heartbeat. She firmly believes she is investing in young people's lives and absolutely loves what she does. She no longer feels empty and enjoys helping young people grow and inspire them to be the best they can be.

Adi believes 'The secret to success is to follow your heart and find something you love to do.' Then the rest will fall into place.

We want every child to know: What they have inside is greater than any obstacle.