

“What does it look like to be your most resilient self?”

BRIANNA GREENSPAN



Make It HAPPEN!



Before Reading

Think about your own goals. Do you want to play soccer or make music? All of these activities take time and practice.

During Reading

During reading, review the highlighted vocab words. While learning about Brianna, understand how she got to where she is today. What **skills** has she shown that have helped her **career**? In each chapter, the Make It Happen! activity will help you, too, build skills to reach your own goals.

After Reading

Look in the back of the book for questions and activities to help you think about Brianna's story. Share these with a friend, parent, or teacher. Also, talk about the skills you need to reach your goals.

skill: the ability to do something that comes from training, experience, or practice

career: a job or profession that someone does for a long time



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Early Life



Despite her struggles, Brianna was able to make friends who supported her.

Brianna Greenspan was born in Houston, Texas, on October 19, 1987. Baby Brianna cried all the time. As she got older, she felt worse. Her feet hurt. Her skin burned. Her stomach felt sick. Her arms and legs ached all the time.



Keeping track of Brianna's medication was a full-time job.

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By the time Brianna was 10, life was very difficult. Being outdoors in the sun made her eyes sting, blinding her with tears. Clothing hurt as the fabric rubbed against her skin.

Brianna had dreamed of being a dancer, a cheerleader, or a gymnast. The pain made those dreams impossible. Her mind dreamed, but her body could not keep up. She was uncomfortable with how she looked. She was uncomfortable in her own skin.

Problem After Problem

Brianna missed a lot of school because of her health. She could not always play with the other kids or participate in sports. Simple movements, such as wearing a backpack or sitting in a chair, were hard. Lunchtime was the worst.

Brianna had many food **allergies**.

Brianna's parents did everything they could. They took her to many different doctors. Each had a different **diagnosis** and treatment. Many believed medicine would help her. However, some medicine did not work at all. Some caused other problems. The medicines could even make the pain worse.

Doing things as a family was hard. There was always an appointment to rush to. Brianna had to



Many things would cause Brianna's skin to break out in hives.



allergies: unpleasant or dangerous reactions to something

diagnosis: the identification of an illness or disease by studying its signs and symptoms

complete **physical therapy** at home and then finish her schoolwork. The pain made her angry. No one knew how to make her feel better.

physical therapy: the treatment of a disease or injury through physical means, such as massage, heat, or exercise

Brianna felt like an outsider in many ways. But she still wanted to fit in. It was hard. She hoped that someday she could overcome her challenges.

Make It HAPPEN! Making Time

Brianna was very busy between school and doctor's appointments. It can be hard when you feel like you have too much to do. Here are some tips to help when you are busy.

- Set time aside. It will be hard. You may have to give up something you enjoy. After you are caught up, you can then have a fun time.
- Clear your mind. Take a few moments to stretch.
- Create a checklist. It feels great to check off items as they are completed!

Every time you finish something on your to-do list, you are one step closer to getting time to yourself again. After you are done, be sure to take time to celebrate!



First Steps of the Journey

Chronic illness symptoms became part of Brianna's daily life.

Brianna's life was full of appointments. She visited doctors to help with her **joints**, skin, bones, and eyes. She saw therapists to build up her strength. Her body's joints were weak. Building muscle around them helped. Brianna's mystery illness took over her life. Each doctor had their own idea about what was wrong.

In third grade, some girls began bullying Brianna. They acted like she would get them sick. Sometimes even teachers did not know how to treat her. Brianna could not easily explain her illness to them. But one girl, Alex, stood up for Brianna. Alex said that it was mean to tease people. Her kindness **inspired** Brianna. They became great friends.

It was a time of uncertainty and challenges. No one had any answers to fix Brianna's body.

Brianna was doing her best, and she knew her doctors were too. Things were not going to get easier. But Brianna had been fighting as long as she could remember, and she wasn't about to quit.

joints: the places where two parts of the skeleton fit together; knees and elbows are examples

inspire: to make someone feel like they want to—and can—do something

Small Successes

At age 12, Brianna was diagnosed with a new condition. The bones in her spine would slip out of place. Brianna had to wear a full back brace for nine months. She wore it for 23 hours a day.

Brianna knew she needed to work hard. She had to be brave. After years of braces and therapy, Brianna began to gain new **confidence**.

In high school, Brianna went on a group trip to Costa Rica. The trip was hard physically and mentally. One day the group was hiking up a mountain. Brianna knew she would not be able to keep up with everyone. She was **determined** to finish, though. Two other girls kept her company. Together, they reached the campsite.



Back and neck braces helped Brianna's joints stay in place. They also made her a target for bullies.

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confidence: the feeling or belief that you can believe and trust someone

determined: having made a decision and resolved to see it through

Brianna was thankful for her friends. One girl even said she would not have been able to make it without Brianna! Brianna could see small **victories** along the hike. Each small step felt like a success.

victory: success in a challenging struggle or a difficult situation

Make it HAPPEN! Speak Up!

Brianna was bullied in school because of her illnesses. It can be hard to speak up for yourself or for a friend who is being bullied. But standing up for someone else can make a big difference in that person's life. Here are some ways you can help.

- Reach out! If you see someone eating lunch alone, ask if you can join them. Try making new friends and including new people. You never know what interesting stories or talents someone has to share.
- Speak up when you see bullying. Do not ignore it. Do not join in. Be kind and set a good example.
- Ask for help. Go to a trusted adult such as a teacher or principal for help to stop bullying.

You can help stop bullying and make your school and community a more positive place.