



## May 2026 enCourage Newsletter

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Middle school is hard. I don't think that's a controversial statement. The years between 11 and 14 bring more change — physically, emotionally, socially — than almost any other period of life, and kids are expected to navigate that while also figuring out who they are and how they fit in the world. It's a lot.

This August, enCourage is hosting Bloom Camp, a three-day experience at Prairie Loft for youth in grades 6–8. Camp runs August 4–6 from 9 AM to 2 PM each day, and it's built around three things we know matter for young people: confidence, connection, and creativity.

Those aren't just nice words. Confidence means knowing your own values and being able to act on them even when it's hard. Connection means building real relationships — with yourself, with peers, with your community. Creativity means finding ways to express who you are and experience joy. These are skills, and like all skills, they can be learned and practiced.

Here's why this matters beyond camp: young people who develop a strong sense of self and healthy relationship skills are less likely to perpetrate violence against others and less likely to experience violence themselves. Prevention doesn't always look like prevention. Sometimes it looks like a kid spending three days outdoors learning to trust their own voice.

If you know a young person in grades 6–8 — a child, grandchild, neighbor, student — we'd love to have them at Bloom Camp. Registration information is at <https://encouragecenter.org/get-informed/get-informed-bloom-programming/>

Jo Bair, MSW

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### Cultivate a Culture of Care

Communities thrive when members look out for one another. Green Dot isn't just about stopping harm; it's about fostering a culture of care. Encourage kindness, support, and awareness in your daily life. Recognize moments when someone could use help or encouragement, and offer it without judgment. This month, focus on creating positive interactions and modeling respectful behavior. Your actions influence others, helping to normalize intervention and accountability. Small, consistent choices, like checking in, offering support, or standing up for fairness, can cultivate a safer, healthier environment where violence is less likely to occur.

**For questions or to schedule a Green Dot Training at your business or organization, email [greendot@encouragecenter.org](mailto:greendot@encouragecenter.org)**

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### I Ended Up

I was journaling recently when I wrote the phrase, I ended up and then stopped. I circled it. Kept going. But it stayed with me.

I ended up is common enough — we all use it. But I hear it a lot from men in our intervention program when they're describing harmful things they've done to their partners, to their children. I ended up raising my voice. I ended up grabbing her arm. I ended up spitting in her face.

Now hear it without: I raised my voice. I grabbed her arm. I spit in her face.

Harder, right? More immediate. More real. Good. That's exactly the point.

I ended up puts grammatical distance between a person and their action. It frames something the speaker chose and did as something that simply... happened to them. It softens the edges of a thing that has sharp edges — and when those edges get soft enough, a person can convince themselves, or stay unconvinced otherwise, that they weren't really responsible. That it was circumstances. Provocation. Just how things went.

Here's the thing: language is the closest window we have into another person's thinking. We can't scan a brain. We can't read minds. What we can do is listen — carefully, seriously — to how someone talks about what they did. Responsible language, language that places the actor squarely inside their own actions, is one of the strongest signals we have that a person's thinking is becoming more responsible. And the reverse is also true. Because thinking drives behavior. The same thinking,

reliably, produces the same outcomes — or worse. A person who can keep convincing themselves, or stay unconvinced otherwise, that they were justified in the past will find a way to convince themselves they'd be justified again.

So in our program, we ask participants to account for their behavior a specific way: I did this to her. It harmed her in these ways. No story. No context. No ended up. Just the action, the impact, owned fully. It's uncomfortable. It's supposed to be.

If you're someone who has caused harm — in your relationship, in your home — I want to invite you to pay attention to your own language when you tell the story. Not to shame you. But the language is a window, and what's visible through it matters, and if you're willing to look honestly at what's there, that's where real change begins. Not in good intentions. In the hard, clear-eyed work of seeing what you've actually done and deciding, with help, to become someone who won't do it again.

If you're someone who has experienced harm, you may recognize this from the other side — the way an apology containing I ended up lands differently from one that doesn't. You're not imagining it. The language is telling you something true. Trust that.

We're here. (402) 463-5810



## Needs List & Volunteer Opportunities

- Wanting to volunteer at enCourage? If interested in volunteering, please call 402-463-5810 and ask for Shawna.
- We also always accept donations of clothing, household items, gently used toys, kitchen items, toiletries, size 3 and up diapers, laundry detergent, and unlocked, working cellphones.
- We are currently looking for individuals who would be available to foster pets for survivors fleeing violence. If interested, please call 402-463-5810 and ask for Shawna.



## Healthy Healing Support Group

Each Tuesday from 4-5 pm (new time) enCourage hosts a peer support group. This group gives attendees time to connect with other survivors and discuss and practice new skills that help attendees recover and thrive after violence. We discuss what healthy relationships look and feel like. Learn healthy ways to manage obstacles and overcome the insecurities that develop from trauma and end the cycle of violence. Email [shawna@encouragecenter.org](mailto:shawna@encouragecenter.org) for questions.



# Calendar of Events

- Every Tuesday from 4:30 - 6 pm, we offer a Support Group at enCourage Advocacy Center and a Healthy Healing Educational Group from 5 - 6 pm.
- Each month on the 3rd Wednesday of the month from 1 - 3 pm, the Nebraska Aids Project will be at enCourage Advocacy Center providing Free and Confidential HIV and STI Testing. Contact Heather for an appointment by emailing HeatherB@nap.org. Walk-ins are also welcome.
- Bloom Camp 2026 is fast approaching. This is a 3-day camp from 8/4 - 8/6/2026 from 9 am - 2 pm each day at the Prairie Loft. This camp is for youth in 6th - 8th grades for the 2026-27 school year. The curriculum focuses on building confidence and connection with both self and others in a natural outdoor setting.



**CONFIDENCE**

**CONNECTION**

**CREATIVITY**

**enCourage**  
ADVOCACY CENTER

**PRAIRIE LOFT**  
Center for Outdoor and Agricultural Learning

For more info or to register your child scan the QR code or call 402-463-5810



**Bloom Camp**

Inspiring youth to *Bloom* into their best selves

For youth grades  
6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup>

**AUGUST 4<sup>TH</sup> - 6<sup>TH</sup> FROM  
9 AM - 2 PM EACH DAY**

Prairie Loft Center 4705 DLD Road west of Hastings