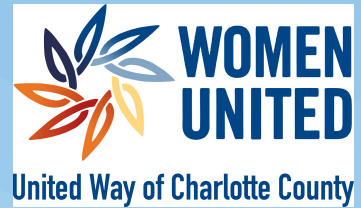


2022 Woman of Courage Collette Bailey



Reflected in the mirror were mistakes, flaws, sadness. The mirror revealed too much. It showed a broken home, a broken body, a broken mind.

A broken woman.

Looking at the broken pieces was overwhelming. They couldn't possibly be put back together in any other way than chaos and disarray.

They were broken.

I was broken.

But the truth about broken pieces is that they still exist. They can still be used, although perhaps not in their original form any longer.

Broken pieces can be made beautiful again, if you have the courage to keep looking in the mirror.

It took courage to face myself in the mirror, seeing the broken pieces day after day.

It took courage to get a job, but I saw in the mirror the example it would set for my children and the independence it would give me.

It took courage to get medication assisted treatment and mental health assistance, but I saw in the mirror that seeking help is sign of strength, not weakness.

It took courage to be selfish during my continued recovery, but I saw in the mirror the importance of putting myself first at times.

It took courage to face myself in the mirror, but every day, the pieces were arranged just a little differently than the day before. In time, the reflection in the mirror showed those same broken pieces, but now they were beautiful again.

Those broken pieces can hear and accept criticism. They can hear guidance and accept wisdom.

Those broken pieces can trust again.

- can be a good mother and have a sober family.
- can get out of bed and do one thing differently each day to counter my anxiety.
- can advocate for my medical needs.
- can see what is good instead of just what is wrong.
- can let go of the things I can't control.

Those broken pieces I see reflected in the mirror are me. They are beautiful. And they are courageous.

In the mirror, today I can say with confidence, with courage:

I am **strong** because I know my weakness.

I am **beautiful** because I know my flaws.

I am **fearless** because I learned to recognize illusion from reality.

I am **wise** because I learn from my mistakes.

I am **a lover** because I have felt hate.

And I **can laugh** because I have known sadness.

Today, in the mirror, I see someone who has accomplished a lot. I am proud of the mom I am becoming. My words matter. I am somebody.

And I am a woman of courage.