

Maria-

She is the youngest of five and is 14 years old. Two of her brothers and sisters have moved out of the house. One of her brothers that are still living with her family is hooked on drugs and steals from the family for drug money. One of her sisters is 17 and has a baby. Her mother tries to work to make money to help pay for food and housing. Her dad is sick and cannot work. Maria is thinking about running away.

John-

John is 17 and is looking forward to going to college soon. His dad left when he was really young and his mom has raised him as a single mom his whole life. His mom works long hours trying to stay employed and keep her boss happy. John worries a lot about his mom because she was recently diagnosed with diabetes and it has physically been affecting her to the point where she has had to miss work to tend to the demands of the disease. John has been helping out as much as he can around the house and it is causing him to sometimes miss school and fall behind with his studies. John is scared that if his mom doesn't get her diabetes under control that she may die or at least lose a limb.

Gwyn-

Is 16 and has been fighting leukemia for 2 years. She has to undergo several treatments and spends a lot of time at Children's Hospital. She is in and out of school and it has been extremely difficult to keep up with her classwork and doing well in her classes. She has gotten really stressed out and at times really depressed because of her illness and not being able to be a "normal teenager". Her parents have hired a tutor to help her stay up with her school work. The little time that she has been at school, she has faced other kids making fun of the way she looks because the treatments have caused her to lose her hair. Gwyn just is longing for acceptance by her peers.

Olena-

Olena has currently just moved to America with her family. She didn't get much of a say in the move and she had to leave all her friends and a lot of her extended family. She only got to bring one suitcase worth of stuff. Now living in America she does not enjoy going to school. Most kids at her school tend to not be willing to be friends with her because she is not from here. This causes Olena to feel alone and depressed. There are many days where she doesn't want to go to school and she doesn't. This is causing her to get behind in her classes and now she may be faced with having to go a 5th year to meet her high school diploma requirements.

Juan-

Juan is a 15 year old teenager who is extremely stressed and depressed. Juan and his family had to move in with his Aunt and Uncle and his cousins. Now there are 15 people living in a 4 bedroom house. Things are cramped and you can never get any alone time to think. Juan has to sleep in a closet on the floor and some mornings he doesn't wake up for school. Juan is struggling in school to stay up with his studies but also to make friends. Too top it all off, his Dad lost his job and that is why they had to move in with his Aunt and Uncle.

Zara-

Zara is 14 and just had to leave her home country of Iraq. Her father is having an extremely hard time finding work and her mother feels as if she has no employable skills either. They are poor and having a hard time making rent and paying for food. On top of this, her brother has fallen into drugs and is addicted to heroin. This is making matters worse because her brother is mixed up with the wrong crowd and owes drug debts. Zara and her parents are scared that the drug dealer and his gang may come after them to get their debt repaid. It is just too much to deal with for Zara.