

# Miracle Children's

Seth – 8 Years Later (Spring, 2015)

“Seth” was one of my clients whose story I told in *Miracle Children*, published in 2008. He recently drove to my office to visit for a bit. Although I had seen him now and then for short “hellos,” it had been seven years since I worked with him in-depth. He is currently a junior in high school (homeschooled) and takes several classes at the nearby community college. He walked into my office as a tall (I think he may be 6 feet) young man! During our visit, we talked about Seth’s current interests and activities, school, and his hopes and desires for the future.

**Anna:** Seth, this is unbelievable! You look fantastic!

**Seth:** Thanks! (with an ear-to-ear grin)

**Anna:** You’re going to make me cry! I’m so incredibly happy to see you. You bring such joy! I remember I really liked you when you were little, but I felt like you were struggling so badly, I and kept thinking, “there’s such a neat kid in there,” and you’ve grown up now. It’s so unbelievable. Thank you for coming to see me!

**Seth:** I’m happy to be here. I was recently reading the book you published [*Miracle Children*], especially the chapter you wrote about me, and it brought back a flood of memories. It made me want to come see you again.

**Anna:** I want to publish an update on what you are doing now. People have said to me, “It’s fine to know this is what a person went through, but has it changed their life many years later? Has it made a long-term difference?” It dramatically changed your life. What do you think about the changes you’ve experienced? Do you remember changes?

**Seth:** I think the biggest changes were for me came socially. Now I am an extreme extrovert and I absolutely love people. I have no problem talking to complete strangers and I feel socially comfortable. I think that’s the biggest difference for me. I can remember being very uncomfortable with people and now that’s not a problem at all. I’ve also noticed that I’m very well balanced, which is huge for me, and I don’t see it in many people. I love science and math. I enjoy thinking about analyzing things — critical thinking. I enjoy astronomy. At the same time, I have a huge passion for art. And I love philosophy.

**Anna:** This is what I noticed in others I have worked with, particularly amongst boys. I don’t know if it’s because I haven’t heard girls or their parents voice it as often, but some of the boys I worked with when they were very young have grown to have very well-rounded interests, abilities and talents. Parents have shared that some of these boys have become more well-rounded than their siblings. You’re like that. You’re multi-faceted.

**Seth:** I am. Everything fascinates me. I’m interested in so many things.

**Anna:** Describe, then, some things you are doing these days.

**Seth:** Um, what am I not doing? I dance, act, participate in Martial Arts and archery. I write poetry and stories, although I usually end up not finishing my stories.

**Anna:** I remember when your writing changed. Have you had anything published?

**Seth:** No, nothing has been published.

**Anna:** You just write for your own pleasure.

**Seth:** Yes. I really like writing poetry.

**Anna:** Do you have a sample?

**Seth:** A silver stream of eloquence  
A veil of Shadow pulled across the eyes  
A song of sorrow, a word of hope  
The whispered muttered tale  
Sanctity in sorrow and remorse  
The poet's legacy, his head, his heart, his tears.

**Anna:** Acting — where have you performed?

**Seth:** I perform in school plays and at the Community Theater in Brighton, where I also dance.

**Anna:** Name some parts or characters you have played.

**Seth:** I've played main characters and ensemble. In *The Wizard of Oz*, I was a jitterbug, the mayor of the Munchkins, Oz and several other characters. In *Beauty and the Beast* I played Gaston.

**Anna:** Is it hard to memorize a lot of lines?

**Seth:** No, not any harder than memorizing for a test.

**Anna:** Do you sing and dance as well?

**Seth:** Yes, I perform in a musical theater. I've been doing swing dance for a year now. My sister does it with me. We're actually going to Iowa this weekend for a competition.

**Anna:** Wonderful! Good luck with it. Do you compete in other things as well?

**Seth:** I'm going to Switzerland and Italy hopefully in October with my Martial Arts group. It's for an international competition. We're flying into Milan where we'll do some hiking and tour a bit. Then we're going to go to Florence and Rome (I hope to see the Vatican). Then we're going to go to Switzerland for the competition and then fly back to Milan to come home.

**Anna:** I've been to Italy.

**Seth:** Is it cool?

**Anna:** It's awesome! I would go back in a heartbeat. I love Italy. History is in the middle of everyday life. You turn a corner and there's something from hundreds of years ago.

**Seth:** That's what I've heard. Like you walk across a bridge and find out the bridge is older than our country.

**Anna:** Yes. It's really fun. The weather is fantastic and people are outside eating and walking late at night.

**Seth:** I'm excited about going.

**Anna:** So, what belt are you [in Aikido Martial Arts]?

**Seth:** I'm a blue belt. I've been doing this for four years.

**Anna:** You just do everything, don't you?

**Seth:** Yes (with a big smile). Well, this will be my first competition for dance and Martial Arts. I've never competed in either of them until now. But I have competed in archery.

**Anna:** Are you pretty good at that?

**Seth:** I go back and forth. I've been pretty good, but I've slacked off recently. It's more of a hobby. I do it for enjoyment. It's relaxing.

**Anna:** What else do you do for enjoyment?

**Seth:** I have some unusual hobbies. I practice juggling, contact juggling, and weird, circus-like things such as using devil sticks or flower sticks. I'm mediocre at these things because I don't spend long enough time on each of them, but they're fun. I enjoy community service too.

**Anna:** Great! Tell me about some of your experiences with community service.

**Seth:** I've worked with Burmese refugees. Have you heard of Project Worthmore? There's a lot of ethnic cleansing going on in Burma and a lot of the refugees come to Colorado. We have a big population here in Denver. I've been helping with ESL [English Second Language] with some of them and teaching basics. I am also involved in things at church and 4H.

**Anna:** What kinds of things have you done at church?

**Seth:** All kinds of things – helping with the food bank and different things like that. I help in children's church a lot. It's fun working with the little kids.

**Anna:** I'm sure you're great with them.

**Anna:** Tell me about school.

**Seth:** I'm taking classes at the community college while still finishing high school as a homeschooler.

**Anna:** Fantastic! What classes are you taking? I take Geometry and Spanish as a homeschooler. Most of my other classes are at the community college.

**Anna:** Was it intimidating at first?

**Seth:** No. I really like the mental challenge, I like the people, and I find I do really well under teachers. I like having a professor I can go to and ask questions. I like rephrasing things back for confirmation. So, a professor explains for example, how the planets orbit around the sun. I then try to come up with my own analogy and explain it back to my professor, and he might say, "Yes, that's a good way to think about it." Having professors is really cool.

**Anna:** I bet they really like you.

**Seth:** (Laughs)

**Anna:** Because you participate in class.

**Seth:** I do talk a lot, yes. (Laugh)

**Anna:** That's great. What kinds of grades are you getting?

**Seth:** As far as I know so far — we haven't had finals yet — I have a 4.0.

**Anna:** Impressive! You participate just like everybody else, right? There are no special accommodations?

**Seth:** No. I do as much work and in the same way as the other students.

**Anna:** Tell me about your classes.

**Seth:** Last semester I took writing, intro to theater (I love acting). This semester I'm taking astronomy and ethics.

**Anna:** Ethics is tough!

**Seth:** Yes. I actually like philosophy a lot.

**Anna:** Does it challenge your faith?

**Seth:** No. My dad is well versed in ethics and philosophy. Sunday nights our pastor comes over. I listen to Dad and him talk about philosophy. They pose a lot of really interesting questions about a lot of things and debate it. That's why I don't find ethics particularly challenging. I find it to be really interesting.

**Anna:** That's wonderful.

**Anna:** Ok, so you're taking Geometry. Have you had Algebra?

**Seth:** Yes.

**Anna:** How did you like it?

**Seth:** I like it. Actually, I hated math for a long time, and then I started Geometry this year. I love it. I want to go back sometime and do Algebra again because I had a hard time with it. I feel like I understand math better now and I want to try it again.

**Anna:** What about history?

**Seth:** I like history a lot. I'm not fond of American history. I don't find it particularly interesting. But medieval history, feudal systems, Japanese...the eras of sharp weapons, right? (Laugh)

**Anna:** What about science?

**Seth:** I think it's so cool to see how things work. Understanding things around us. Take fire, for example. We see fire, we make fire (like campfires) but what exactly is that? Interesting. I want to know more.

**Anna:** You can say that about everything.

**Seth:** Yes.

**Anna:** Do you like to read?

**Seth:** Yes, I do.

**Anna:** What kinds of books do you read?

**Seth:** I haven't read a lot lately because of my classes, but the last book I read was *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* [by Alexander Solzhenitsyn]. I thought it was fantastic.

**Anna:** What did you like about it?

**Seth:** I like the contrast between Russian and American literature. In America, we think, "Oh no! This guy's in prison and being whipped. It's so terrible!" But in Russia, it's so matter of fact. They focus on completely different things: he's in prison; he does manual labor, and at the end of the book, he acknowledged that he received two extra pieces of bread with his meal. It was a good day. The author is telling you these terrible things as part of what happened. He doesn't try to make them seem horrible. At the end he basically says, "But I got my steaming bowl of gruel, life is good." I like examining the difference between the two cultures. In an American book like *Huck Finn* [Mark Twain], you see how horrible these things are, how terrible the slaves are treated. In the Russian book, you can realize and actually feel the enjoyment over a loaf of bread. It can change your perspective on things. Even in the worst things, we can enjoy, for example, this meal. Right? It's harsh but it opens your eyes.

**Anna:** Good. Books by foreign authors can convey different perceptions of the world.

**Seth:** Yes. You can also travel all through time and space and go everywhere in a book. When you read a book, you can forget you're reading the book because you're so wrapped up in the story. The ability to experience things you've never experienced is the power of a story. Not just a book, but also a play, a movie, a TV show. I can know what it's like to be a murderer or a victim. I can feel what it's like to lose my mind, or to win the lottery. "I can experience a thousand realities from my armchair." I don't remember who said that. This is why I like acting. I love storytelling — what it is. You can tell the same story through a film or through a play that you can through a book. We have the legend of *Beowulf* [anonymous] where we see the hero having the responsibility of becoming a king as well as fighting against the monster Grendel. How is that different than the *Avengers*? It's the odyssey of these characters on a journey together. A film, or a play, is another medium of storytelling.

**Anna:** I think you have a very deep perception of life, which is unusual to see in someone as young as you. Your parents have done a wonderful job.

**Seth:** I think a lot of it comes from my parents. Both of my parents love literature. They imbued that in me. When I read a book, it's not just a story. It's more, what does this story say? What does this tale mean? Even when I was younger, I'd read a book like *Lord of the Rings* [J.R.R. Tolkien] and we would look at a character like maybe Aragorn. My Mom would ask, "Why do you like this character?" And we would have to think about it.

**Anna:** That's really good. I suggest that to parents all the time — ask "why" and "what do you think?" when reading books with their children. Spur young reader's thoughts. Make them think.

**Seth:** Yes. Like when I read a fiction book, or my Mom read, we always stopped and talked about it.

**Anna:** So, you probably really like classic literature.

**Seth:** I do like some fantasy. I like *Harry Potter* [J.K. Rowling]. I've read the *Hunger Games* series [Suzanne Collins]. I thought it was fantastic. And then I like classic literature too. A good mix. I read a lot of fantasy when I was younger. At the same time, I'd say, "Hey Dad, I need something to read." He'd say, "How about Dante's *Inferno*?"

**Anna:** That's a long read. Have you read *War and Peace* [Leo Tolstoy]?

**Seth:** No.

**Anna:** Great book.

**Seth:** I need to start *Crime and Punishment* [Fyodor Dostoyevsky].

**Anna:** That's a good book.

**Anna:** So, are you working?

**Seth:** No, I need to get a job because I need to earn money for my Martial Arts competition trip to Italy and Switzerland in October.

**Anna:** What kind of job do you hope to get?

**Seth:** Well, I don't know. That's my homework assignment for this month. I was thinking maybe Starbucks because I've heard a lot of good things about it and it's a good part-time job after doing a lot of community service. I like jobs that make me work and I don't just sit.

**Anna:** Great. So when do you graduate from high school?

**Seth:** Next year.

**Anna:** What do you want to be?

**Seth:** What do I want to be? I want to go into performing arts as an actor, choreographer, or something in that area.

**Anna:** How do you plan to get into acting or choreography, or in that general arena?

**Seth:** Well, from what I've heard and researched, there's really only one way and that's just to dive in. I'm planning to get a liberal arts degree because from what I understand it's good to have a degree in general. It shows commitment and that I've thought about what I want to do. It's the kind of thing they look at. They don't really want a specific acting degree unless it's higher, like a master's. So, I want to get a general liberal arts degree. I might pursue philosophy too. So, get that and jump in. If there's enough theater here [Denver area], great, if not I might look at Seattle.

**Anna:** So, ok. What do you picture yourself doing when you're 40?

**Seth:** I haven't thought that far. When I'm 40... the same things I'm doing now. I want to learn. I think that's the biggest thing. I want to learn music. I want to learn art — everything!

**Anna:** Yes. I feel like I have too much I want to learn yet. Life is too short. I need nine lives in order to learn all the things I want to learn.

**Seth:** That's exactly how I feel. I would really like to learn to play the violin, for example. And I have no musical talent.

**Anna:** But you never know...

**Seth:** Hmm

**Anna:** Well, you can dance! If you can dance, maybe you can learn to play an instrument.

**Seth:** Well, yeah. I sing in the musical theater.

**Anna:** Oh, you do? You sing?

**Seth:** Yes. It's a musical theater

**Anna:** What do you mean you have no musical talent?

**Seth:** I don't.

**Anna:** You mean with musical instruments?

**Seth:** No, I mean with music. When I started singing, I started out almost completely tone deaf. It took a lot of work to get to the point where I can sing OK. I know for a fact I have a lot of trouble with music. It's something I have to work a lot harder at.

**Anna:** It seems like there's nothing you wouldn't be able to do.

**Seth:** Well, there's nothing I wouldn't be willing to try.

**Anna:** Have you got your passport?

**Seth:** That's where I'm going after I leave today.

**Anna:** Thank you, so much for stopping by to see me today! It's so good to see you again.