

IALAC STORY

This is a story about Andre and one of his most prized possessions — his IALAC sign. When Andre was born, he was just like the rest of us. He came equipped with a sign called IALAC. IALAC stands for “I am Lovable and Capable.”

Because it was invisible, no one — not his parents, relatives or the doctor who delivered him — knew it was there. Nevertheless, it was shiny and new and in the earliest days of Andre’s life when his young mother and father (who were happy and in love) stroked him, kissed him and admired him, his IALAC sign actually grew a little bit larger and stronger every day.

The IALAC sign is an indication that children come into this world free of self doubt, feelings of shame, inferiority or anything negative. They learn those things from the people and the world around them. And so it began for Andre:

At age three, Andre, his mom and dad did a lot of things together. They had fun on the playground and watched cartoons on Saturdays. One day at the playground he heard his mom and dad yelling at each other. Andre felt scared. He went over to give his dad a hug and his father pushed him away and told him to go back to the swings. His father’s face looked so mean that Andre started to cry. His mom came over and hugged him but Andre still felt scared. (RIP) A very small piece of Andre’s IALAC sign fell off. Andre didn’t feel so lovable and capable at the moment.

When Andre was almost 4, he overheard his mother, Mika, and his grandmother, Sarah, talking about his father. His grandmother said, “What’s the problem with Andre’s dad? He doesn’t ever have any money. He can’t even buy medicine when the boy is sick. You don’t need that no good dog.” Andre didn’t understand exactly what his grandmother meant, but he could tell by her voice that she was mad at his daddy and that made Andre feel sad. Another piece of his IALAC sign broke off because Andre wanted his mom and grandmother to love his daddy like he did. (RIP)

On his fourth birthday, Andre heard his father at the door. He went running to the door, but his mother was there looking very mad. She and his daddy started to yell at each other. His mom said, “Where’s the money you promised? I don’t want to see that stupid toy you bought for his birthday. He needs clothes and food.” Andre covered his ears and started back into his room. But not before he heard his father say, “You can’t keep me away from my son. I hate you.” (RIP)

A few months later, Andre was visiting his father. They went to see a Disney movie in 3D. It was a good day with his dad. Then they went to the house of a lady named Miss Kim for dinner. Andre didn’t like the way that Miss Kim hugged and kissed his daddy. Andre told Miss Kim that her macaroni and cheese didn’t taste as good as his mommy’s. Miss Kim got mad and called his mommy a bad name. Andre’s dad told him to eat and tell Miss Kim that her food was good. Andre told his dad that he wanted to go home to his mommy, and his dad got real mad. It wasn’t a good day anymore. (RIP)

IALAC STORY *Continued*

A year later, Andre started kindergarten. His mom called him her little man. He was growing up fast. Sometimes when they were cuddling or eating dinner, she would tell him, "Your daddy doesn't come see you like he should. He's not a good father. Don't be like him when you grow up." Andre felt confused and sad. (RIP) He wondered if his dad stayed away because his mother and grandmother were so mean to him.

After not seeing him for several months, Andre had a Skype visit with his dad on his mother's computer. It was fun. His father gave him a big smile and promised to come get him the next weekend. The next Saturday, Andre took his bath and got dressed. He waited and waited, but his dad never came. Andre kept waiting. Finally, his mom told him his dad wasn't coming. She asked if he wanted spaghetti, his favorite, for dinner. Andre said he wasn't hungry. His stomach hurt and his heart did too. (RIP)

By the time Andre was in third grade, he had gotten used to not seeing his father much. It was no big deal. He started getting into trouble a lot at school. His teacher said he had a behavior problem. Today his mom had to pick him up from school because he was being expelled for bullying another child. Andre's mom was furious. Andre acted tough like he didn't care but inside he was nervous. (RIP)

On the way home, his mom yelled at him. "What's wrong with you? I can't believe you got expelled in third grade! You're messed up just like your no-good daddy. I can't take this anymore." Andre just stood there and acted like he didn't care. He had learned that this was the best way to deal with his mother when she started screaming. But inside he wondered, "Was his daddy no good? Does his daddy love him? Was he just like his dad?" A big piece of his IALAC sign cracked and fell off. (Final RIP)

** At the end of the reading, hold up the other IALAC sign that has some small tears. Say: When Andre was all grown up, his IALAC sign had done a lot of mending. Young people are very resilient. BUT there were some pieces that were gone FOREVER.*