

**H**ave you ever seen a “money tree” in human form?

The one that we’ve met goes by the name of Austin. He looks, eats and behaves entirely like a human being, but in his parents’ eyes, he only served the function of a money tree: all the monetary rewards from the Ministry of Education that he earns from achieving fantastic grades in school were all squandered by his parents in drinking sprees.

“49.50 out of 50? You useless pig”, his mum would snarl.

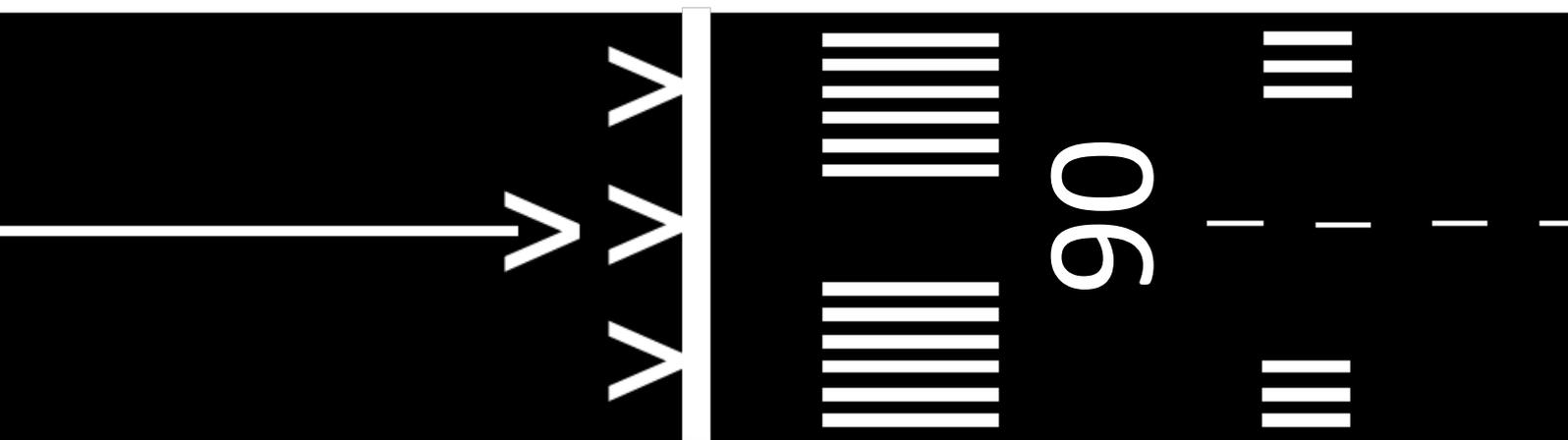
Physical abuse from his father would often also follow. Without a perfect score, they were angry that they lost a chance to brag about Austin.

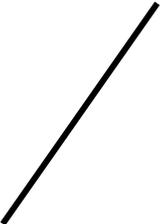
With a worldview constructed from the image of two abusive parents, Austin refuse to make friends in school, out of fear that he would be hurt again. He chose to be quiet and inexpressive, just like a money tree.

When Austin entered secondary school, he decided that he wasn’t going to be lonely anymore. But Austin’s attempts to be more outspoken came across as overbearing. He would dismiss his classmates' ideas, call them names and even talk back to his teachers.

“I just felt angry constantly... Sometimes I would get into fights outside of school because the person didn’t show me any respect.”

Austin’s turning point came when he joined the Tchoukball Programme in YGOS. Though he showed no interest in the programme initially, he could not resist the lure of good food. During the second session, he met his mentor, Jonathan.





**Andrew**  
**Male, 19 years-old**  
**Tchoukball Programme**

“He played sports with me and just wanted to befriend me. I didn’t understand why he was so willing to help me even when he knew nothing about me.”

In his journey, Austin also came to know about Christ and started to attend church sessions. Jonathan, in support of Austin’s faith, also shared his personal testimony with him. However, even though Austin had found a community at YGOS and his church to support him, he still faced the challenge of giving his commitment, an idea that he was unfamiliar with. When Jonathan initiates an appointment, Austin didn’t see any reason to turn up. It was only after Jonathan’s firm reminder that Austin grew in awareness of his communication style. Making tremendous progress, Austin also learned to understand the reason behind people’s behaviour and choices.

“When I do that, it’s harder to be angry at someone.”

Currently, Austin is studying counselling. He enjoys being a pillar of support to people in his social circle and advising them in the right direction. He also hopes that in the future he can study theology.

