

2006 College Survival Essay Scholarship – WINNER!

What Success Means to Me

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Recently, I asked my husband what his definition of success is, and he said “Attaining wealth was success.” I asked, “Do you think Ron and Christy are successful?” (Ron and Christy are our friends who just built a three million dollar house on a lake.) “Absolutely!” my husband said. His idea of success is their 13,000 square foot house, a 2007 Bentley, and several sixty-one inch plasma TV’s scattered throughout their house. Really curious now I asked him, “Do you think I am a success?” He paused. I waited. Since he bases his value of success solely on wealth, I was interested how he would answer me.

When I was nineteen I was extremely successful. I won a medal in the Olympics for Gymnastics. I had breathed, slept, ate, and trained gymnastics for fifteen years of my life. Ultimately, my overindulgence in training led me to become one of the best gymnasts in the world. My husband wanted to meet me because he followed my career and was a little star struck with Olympic gymnasts. But that success was a long time ago, and I chose the path to raise a family with him. I shoved schooling and a career to the side to once again indulge myself, but this time into motherhood.

I waited and gave him my cutest smile. I was still waiting for an answer. Of course he was stuck. I could just imagine his thought process. “She used to be successful, but hasn’t really done anything noteworthy since the Olympics. She just started going to school, but probably won’t have any other career for another four years. No job means; no money, hmmm.” Would he dare say that I wasn’t a success, therefore, I was a failure? He knows better than that. Or will he be politically correct and not really answer the question. Finally, he smiled back at me and said, “We are on our way to success.” Realizing his answer was based on his definition of success; I accepted it as good enough and stopped prying. I could have started a fight, but I gave him a kiss and continued watching T.V.

I consider myself a successful person. Not because of my experiences in my past, but because of the direction I am taking now. I can not live the rest of my life on the coat tails of one successful accomplishment, so I am trying to achieve new goals. My next challenge is finishing college. I am attending school to finish what I started fifteen years ago. When I was training in gymnastics my attention was so focused that everything other than gymnastics was not important. School was hard for me and I dropped out in tenth grade. I was tutored and earned my GED. After school was out of the way, I never gave schooling another thought. But after the Olympics I was stuck. I had spent so much energy training for one goal that I did not have a plan for what I was going to do after I had reached that goal. I tried college, but I was not prepared and I was scared and intimidated. I dropped out and started a new life as a wife and mother. My new life was wonderful, but I felt as if there was one thing that had evaded me. There was that one

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thing that I wasn't able to accomplish. I had thought of college as something unattainable. College defeated me. For years I thought about returning to school, but I was a housewife and mother and I let other priorities stand in the way. Then one day I realized the only thing holding me back from school was the fear of failing. It was difficult for me, but that just meant I had to work harder at it. I used excuses long enough and after fifteen years I now felt ready to conquer my biggest challenge.

I plan on graduating from college with a degree in Psychology and help other athletes achieve their goals. To me success is a series of steps that lead up a path. The path is filled with obstacles to overcome, decisions to be made, and unfortunately chances to fail. A successful person doesn't succumb to failure. She uses failure as a tool for learning how to succeed. Success is not about money or things I have, it is about the opportunities I take and the achievements I make.