

2006 College Survival Essay Scholarship – WINNER!

A Successful Balance

By Kathleen Cadigan
Proctor R. Hug High School
Reno, NV
(Instructor: Brent Judy)

Success is not the achievement of a goal, but the overcoming of obstacles in the way of that goal. Success is failing then achieving. Success is not the ending of something great, but applying a great thing to something greater. Most importantly, success is happiness.

The beginning of my success started in the third grade when I transferred from an elementary school where race minorities were rare to a different elementary school where ethnic diversity was common. At my new school, I realized that I was a minority and I did not fit in because of the color of my skin. I experienced discrimination and racism for the first time at the age of nine and found it hard to accept the prejudices still lived in the world.

Upon entering the school, my view on education and learning was narrow. I quickly realized the chances of friends were slim and grew accustomed to spending most of my free time staying inside with the teacher and not outside with the other students. I realized that I had never applied myself to learning; my want for knowledge developed and so did my want to achieve. My goal was to try in school, grasp the understanding of the curriculum, and to see how far I could go. I overcame the obstacle of discrimination by taking myself out of the situation, but by avoiding my peers, I created a new difficulty; I had no friends.

As I moved from elementary school to middle school, I realized all the grades I earned in the past three years could not replace the feeling of loneliness I had. My happiness mattered more to me than learning. My new goal was to make friends. In a new school and new environment, optimism rushed through me as I introduced myself to a few people from each class. Friendship is important, but to me it was what I had been missing. However, the sacrifice of knowledge for acceptance would take its toll and my so-called “happiness” would only last a few months before I had to put them behind me with another move.

Transferring to a different state was tough, but the transition to the new school was even tougher. The school year had already begun and I would have to start making new friends. Compared to my old middle school my new school was ahead, all the teachers taught deeply to the students, and the school system cared about each student’s education. I found it tough to catch up to the level of my peers while trying to make friends. As the new kid, I was set apart from the other students and discriminated in a new way. Discouragement, loneliness, and sadness led to my failure in middle school; I had failed myself. I did not try in school, apply myself to learning, or achieve any goal I wanted. From this failure, I realized that between the two extremes of no friends and only friends there was a median. I was determined to find this halfway point and made it my next

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goal. By the end of the year, my family and I moved back to my old state, and I to my old school.

With the second chance of a new beginning, I encouraged myself that anything was possible, I just needed the mind-set to do it. I knew I could earn good grades while having friends; it was just a balance between the two. Four years have passed since I set out for this balance, taking most of my high school career. I am now in my senior year of high school where I have found a successful balance. At the top of my class with a 4.0 grade point average, I apply myself to learning by taking advanced placement courses while keeping time open for my friends who accept me for who I am.

My sister once told me, "...choose what will make you the happiest." From her advice, I chose to reflect upon my hardships, learn from my failures, and build upon my accomplishments. My new goal is to strive for education and fulfill my want for knowledge. I plan to graduate high school, attend college where I will apply the achievements of my life to my future, and strive for what will make me happy by keeping a balance of what is important in my life. I have overcome many obstacles and earned my happiness, and that to me is success.