

Juan P

When I had turned around eight years old, I realized that something was wrong with me. I started to make noises and movements that I did not want to make and had absolutely no control over, but I didn't know what was wrong since I was so young. It felt as if I no longer had control over my own body. After being bullied and disciplined by my mom for, "acting out", I ended up getting diagnosed with a rare neurological condition, Tourette's Syndrome. I would tic all the time, during class, at home, and everywhere in general. This affected me heavily in my personal life and academic life, to which it still does.

Tourette's has managed to affect my self-esteem, resulting in me being socially awkward causing me to fall into depression and develop Anxiety. In addition, it has also caused me to become distracted and self-conscious in classrooms, causing my grades to suffer as a result of my diagnosis. Tourette's Syndrome has presented a significant challenge in my life, although I had to learn to not let it get the best of me, such as how I had ultimately decided to start doing better in school, and also involve myself more in extracurricular activities.

Throughout middle and high school, I had to learn how to be able to get through all of the difficulties that had come up as a result of Tourette's Syndrome. I had learned many things such as how to cope with being different from other people, how to be able to interact socially despite my twitches and still am learning many things from having Tourette's Syndrome, such as understanding how difficult it is to have a disability and still be able to succeed academically and also function social-wise, and being able to communicate more efficiently with peers and instructors. At this point, I've also learned to accept Tourette's Syndrome as part of my identity, rather than attempt to be ashamed of it and not accept it as a part of who I am.

With this newfound acceptance of TS, I've managed to go from a 2.7 GPA to a 3.7 GPA, and almost not meeting high school graduation requirements to now graduating with honors in my school. In addition, I've gotten very involved as I've become the President of my school's Future Coders of America, have been in my school's Health & Human Services Academy for the past three years, etcetera. I've also participated in my local community college's Upward Bound program since my sophomore year which is for low-income and first-generation high school students, where I've been given the opportunity to take challenging college courses and engage with my peers. As for the future, I plan on attending UCLA to obtain a Bachelor of Science in Neuroscience with minors in Public Health and Spanish. Afterwards, hopefully attend Stanford Med to become an M.D., then pursue a Ph.D. so I can conduct research on Tourette's Syndrome and other neurological disorders.