

Sarah

At the age of 10 years old, my world was flipped upside down as my neurologist diagnosed me with Tourette's Syndrome. My Tourette's made me do uncontrollable movements that would not interfere with others but would constantly distract me. Entering middle school was already a change, but the diagnosis made everything more difficult. I tried to suppress the urges to tic, but that caused massive headaches and built up tension as if there was an itch that I couldn't scratch.

For 5 years, we struggled to find a medication that would ease the tics and anxious thoughts, while still allowing me to take part in regular activities. As we switched between medications, I had to deal with the side effects, while trying to attend school and keep up my grades. Some medications made it difficult to stay awake with any less than 12 hours of sleep, some caused an abnormal appetite and others would make the anxiety and Tourette's worse.

Academically the disorder posed several problems, the biggest being my inability to concentrate and focus. Sitting down to read anything was nearly impossible. Through most of middle and high school, I spent numerous nights with my mom trying to read the books out loud so I could stay on task, and not let my mind wander off. I would read the textbook, yet nothing would stick to memory even vaguely. Up until middle school, memorization and understanding of school material had come naturally, and the need to intentionally study was new to me, but I learned how to put in more work so that I would continue to succeed in school. My ability to adapt to this new learning style allowed me to continue to achieve great grades and enroll in Advanced Placement classes.

However, this is not to say that I do not continue to deal with Tourettes and anxiety. I still struggle with tics, anxious and worrisome thoughts daily, but through medication and relaxation, I am actively working to overcome them and continue to strive for greatness. I plan to become a clinical psychologist. In order to do this, academically, I will pursue a doctorate degree and certification from my home state of California. Awaiting my acceptance, I hope to study at University of California, San Diego and continue on to their dual enrollment clinical psychology PhD program with San Diego State University. In addition, I plan to minor in Spanish to become bilingual which I hope will open up many opportunities in Southern California.