

“How Optimism Has Paved My Road to Success”

While some people define success as a tangible, measurable thing, comparable between persons, I believe that it is truly subjective – with the right mindset, anything could be seen as a success. As a mere teenager, I find it hard to chart out an exact mapping of my perfect life; instead, I strive to live in contentment, however that may look in my future.

Since childhood, I have always maintained an optimistic view on nearly everything that has come my way. I accredit this valuable trait to my summers spent at camp. To me, summer camp is a refuge, a sacred place where people can escape reality into a world of constant joy and warmth. The friendships and memories I have cultivated there will last me a lifetime, shaping my personality extensively. Knowing that there is such a magical place and having this wonderful experience to look forward to each and every summer gives me a unique motivation for learning and improving myself constantly.

On the last day of every session at my summer camp, each person writes their name on a blank piece of paper and everyone writes them an anonymous note, detailing anything – something they like about that person, a thanks, or even words of encouragement. These once simple papers quickly become multicolored time capsules, filled to the brim with positivity and motivation. I have kept all of my papers, hanging them up on the wall above my desk as a reminder of the cheerful memories and a source of inspiration to make more in the future. In this way, I see myself living optimistically – pushing through the challenges in hopes for self-improvement and a successful future.

Earlier this year, I struggled with my AP Chemistry class. As a generally well-rounded student academically, I have been relatively unused to facing consistent obstacles within my studies. When this began occurring after the first set of quizzes my teacher gave, I was overwhelmed and confused, not feeling prepared for the challenges I foresaw. Stumped, I looked up at my papers from camp for motivation.

Remembering the lessons I learned at camp and all of the people who saw the good in me, I vowed to not let this one small challenge deter me from success.

As a student dedicated to learning, I decided to meet with my teacher and ask him what I could do to study and better understand the material. I had already been supplementing his teaching with that of Khan Academy, a website I frequently used in the past to help enrich my knowledge of other subjects as well. While I was already well ahead of the class in terms of course progress on Khan Academy, I still felt insecure about my knowledge and preparation for our first test due to my prior performance on the quizzes. Telling him all of this, I felt a weight come off of my chest as he gave me words of encouragement for the next day's test, evidently impressed by my efforts outside of class. His reassuring words stayed in my head the next day, soothing my nerves and allowing me to stay clear-headed and logical while tackling the notoriously challenging exam.

Immediately after the test, I felt a strange sense of relief, proud of my perseverance no matter what my score may have turned out to be. As my teacher indicated and I began to believe, the efforts and determination I had put into my goal showcased my tireless drive for improvement, a skill necessary for success in all aspects of life. This, like countless other skills, follows an optimistic mindset – with this positivity, I am able to see the best in myself and others.

I, privileged enough to live a life of generally fond memories, attribute my optimism to recollecting core moments in my life and my desire for a similarly contented future. Memories are indelible; one can always turn to them even in the darkest moments of life, finding the hope to build on them in the future. This life-changing mindset has transformed my life in countless ways – from the perseverance I exhibited academically when things become overwhelming to my constant ambition for self-improvement and fascination with learning. I hope my future self remains optimistic: I don't know how a person could be successful without optimism.