

“Is Optimism the Key to Achieving the Dreams you iMagine?”

What if attaining your dreams could be one simple word to live by? In today's society many often spend months, if not years trying to find the key to achieving their goals. I believe that Optimism is the Key to Achieving the Dreams you iMagine.

Throughout my high school career, I often thought about the future and how I was planning to reach my goals. Second semester of sophomore year I began dual enrollment through Kellogg Community College. Going into my first course I knew it would be more challenging than what I had been used to. During that semester I continually found myself getting frustrated, overwhelmed along with a negative mindset. It wasn't until I began mentoring individuals with disabilities that my mindset had changed.

I was hired into Community Inclusive Recreation (CIR) as a mentor in 2018. When applying for this job I knew I had a passion for helping people with disabilities, but what I did not know was that the participants would eternally impact my life for the better. This position has taught me compassion, patience, and most of all optimism. There would be days I would go to work overwhelmed or stressed thinking about how I would not be able to finish all of my homework or that I would not get a good grade on my exam, but my participants always helped me turn my day around. Before bed I would often reflect on my day. Day after day and week after week, I realized that no matter how good, bad, challenging or easy my day was there was almost always one thing in common; I left work with a smile and a positive attitude. I then started thinking to

myself “why do I feel so hopeful about life when I leave work?” Through many thoughts my answer came upon me; it was optimism.

My participants have taught me the power and value of being optimistic through their actions. Throughout the week my participants take part in various activities and events including bowling, walking club, and water aerobics. Bowling is one of their favorite activities, yet one of the most challenging. However, they do not let that stop them. If they throw a gutter ball they may get frustrated for a second, but then have a smile on their face as they go to pick up their next ball in hopes of doing better. Walking club is also a well-liked activity. There are times that we will be walking through the mall and my participants would wave and say “hi” and get excited when passing someone however, many times in exchange they would get no response followed by a strange look. Some participants do not understand why they do not get a hello back or receive strange looks, but that did not stop them from saying hi and getting excited for the next person that passed by. The participants at Community Inclusive Recreation are the definition of being optimistic; hopefulness and confidence about the future or the successful outcome of something.

Working at CIR has not only taught me compassion and patience, but to me the most important thing that I have learned is to be optimistic. Whether my participants are aware of their optimism or not I have learned through them that even when a situation might not be as we anticipated that it is important to stay hopeful and confident about the future. Being optimist has not only turned my negative mindset to positive, but also taught me that when I am put in situations to look at the good instead of the bad. I have also learned to let go and move on. In the past it was very easy for me to dwell on the

negative and play the “what if” game in my head. I now have learned that what is gone is gone and the important thing is how I react to the aftermath with an optimistic outlook. Through working at Community Inclusive Recreation I have found that optimism is the key to achieving the dreams I have imagined. I am optimistic that I will achieve the dream I imagined by becoming an Occupational therapist specializing in children and adults that have autism and special needs.