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RWS 305W-56

February 9, 2020

Word Count: 1466

Change for the Better

We have all had our down moments in life, the moments that make it feel like the world is against you. These moments can really break you, strengthen you, or define you. With these down moments, comes its counterpart, your response. The way you respond will project your life in a new direction, whether it be drastically changing, or barely at all. However, when we respond, these moments will bring some kind of change. I will be covering my own down moment, or down period of time, and my response to it all.

So, we begin with my freshman year in high school. This period in time, I was just starting high school. Before high school, I was a straight A student and a year ahead in math already. I loved my school and found it the place, where I could truly be me. Also, during the start of this, I was also going through family drama. My parents had always been angry and aggressive people towards me and my sister. But especially during this time, my father and mother were getting into more arguments that led into acts of domestic violence. This got the police involved and drama soon unraveled. This would happen multiple times throughout the next couple of years. It wasn’t these moments, however, that led to my decline.

The moments that led to my decline was the domestic environment I lived in. My siblings themselves started to create an animosity towards me, as they saw me as very similar to my dad, which whom they disliked. I also did not like my dad, so being called an image of him, created a conflict with me against my siblings. With the exposure of such violence and animosity, I grew up in a very tense and aggressive household. This in turn is what led me to my decline from the straight A, happy going student I once was.

School before all the drama untangled was a place where I could really be me. Being able to fully express myself, I was constantly told that I was a super energetic and annoying little kid. This made me the center for bullying, but I didn’t care, because it was always not as bad compared to at home. I excelled in school and had just a handful of quality friends. School was a way for me to be treated with positive reinforcement for doing well. Classes were always easy, and if I did something wrong, it wasn’t as bad as home.

With the family drama, and the bullies calling me annoying, I created a shell around myself. I started to purposely fail classes and exams to see if my parents would notice through all their own conflicts. I found a new friend group, where they were all failing classes too, which resulted in me, continuing failing classes. My thought was that nothing mattered, and school wasn’t that important. It was more important to have fun and hang with friends. One thing I did try in however, was my dancing, as I was on my high school’s dance team. I loved it, and it was my outlet. My third year on the team, my junior year, I was an aggressive person who didn’t like everyone on the team. I got into a few fights with my teammates and was told that if I got into one more fight, I would be kicked off. A few months later, I got kicked off from the only thing I loved.

This was the moment, I really looked back onto who I was. I realized I was this kid, who was angry at life and unsatisfied with his own achievements, or lack thereof. I had recently got a job at McDonalds at this time, where I met the best people of my life. My managers took me as their own kid and raised me to a higher standard. They created a work ethic of not just working hard but giving quality work. They showed me that life is not as bad, when you just wear the right glasses. They showed me that my anger and aggressiveness was useless and ineffective. During my work here, which lasted about a year and a half, I celebrated birthdays, confided in everything to them, and found people who would never see any wrong in me.

Despite the life lessons I learned there, I didn’t learn them immediately. I was still not doing homework and barely passing my classes. I did, however, rediscover my love for math in my AP Calculus 1 class. I excelled in that class and aced every test, but only did about half the homework. Towards the middle of the year, my teacher offered to a specific group of students to independently study for the AP Calculus 2 test and take college math the next year. Being excluded from this group was another wake-up call, that I was not where I needed to be yet. I asked my teacher as to why I didn’t get chosen, and he had said that my work ethic was lacking. I had been told that so many times, and I knew it to be true. But that moment woke me up to really test my limits.

Despite not being chosen for the original group, I still decided to do the independent studying and take the AP Calculus 2 test and get ahead in my education. My teacher didn’t fully believe in me, but he did support me. He answered emails late at night and would stay after school almost every day until 7:00 pm, to help us study for this test. Additionally, he made video lectures of all the topics we had to learn. By not fully believing in me, but still supporting me, almost made it like a fun challenge to prove him wrong.

So along with school from 7:00 am to 2:30 pm, I would work from 3:00 pm to 10:00 pm. I would then study for the calculus test from 10:00 pm to midnight, while waiting for my co-workers to clock out, so we could grab dinner. After dinner, I would continue to study and do homework until about 3:00 am and repeat the next day. These moments in my life is what sparked me to be the best ‘me’ I could ever be. I was proud of my work and work ethic. I found love and support from people I never expected. And I learned that no matter what happens, I always need to keep being the best ‘me’ possible.

That year, I got a lot of work thrown on me, but I also got a new family, a teacher who I can say changed my life, and a new outlook of everything. I ended up getting the highest score you could get on the AP Calculus 2 test, and moving on to math, that sophomores in college would be taking.

The events that arose from that year have been nothing but exceptional. I ended up skipping a year in college from all the math I took in high school, making me eligible to graduate in three years, instead of four. I got a 4.8 and 4.6 grade point average in the following years. I now have a retirement plan set up, along with goals of investing in real estate after college. Additionally, I even have goals of traveling the world, 2 countries a year, and opening up my own tutoring business. To this day, I owe everything to my AP Calculus teacher and my co-workers from McDonald’s. I would not be who I am today without there support, love, and life lessons.

These moments in my life changed me completely, from an angry lost child to goal orientated hardworking student. When you meet the right people, challenge yourself like you have never been challenged, and let go of all your petty emotions, you really start to love yourself and the life you have created. It is without these moments; I would have never felt failure and learned everything from that. I would have never learned that my success was for me and not my parents. Without these moments, I would have never met my family from McDonald’s. I would have never learned the sense of hard work and positive thinking or have the support group I have now. I would have never tried to apply and challenge myself to reach new heights. I would have never been happy with my subpar achievements and would still have the negative thinking of not accomplishing enough. These moments have changed me for the greater, and I am truly grateful that they have carved me into who I am today.