

Thoughts of Learning

SCHOOL DAZE

I hit the snooze for a few more winks,
Gotta get up now; change the baby, he stinks!

Have to wake the kids up so they can eat,
As I stumble down the stairs, I realize, man, I'm beat!

Up late doing homework the night before,
I will try to stay awake in class, but I bet I will snore.

We stop at Speedway to fetch some coffee,
She gets what she always gets -- English toffee.

From there it's off to Franklin, West on 73,
Fighting early morning traffic, it's so much fun for me!

We made it, we are finally here.
When the teacher starts talking, it's time to kick it into gear.

See what she has to say, you had better learn,
It's the GED you want to earn.

Kevin L. Izor

AN OPINION I ONCE HELD THAT I HAVE CHANGED

An opinion that I once held was that I was stupid and dumb. All my life I believed this to be true. I believed this to be true because of people telling me that I was stupid or making me feel dumb. If you start to believe this to be true, then you shut yourself off from the world.

For as long as I can remember in school the teachers told me that I was not as smart as the other kids. They put me in a slow learner's class and made me feel that I could never succeed in school. I came to believe that they were right.

My opinion about myself changed when I started a class to get my GED. It helped me to believe in myself. So now I can say I can do this. My GED teachers told me to start a journal and keep a record of all the new things I learned. So, I began a learning journal, but I made it the way I thought would help me the most. When I learned something new, I color-coded it so I could easily refer back to it. For example, I would write down how to do a math problem and color it orange. Then I would put down an example of the math problem and color it yellow. This helped me see it better and I could also find it more quickly when I needed to review.

From my past experiences I know what stupid and dumb are. They are just words that some people say to make themselves feel better about something in their life. We must always remember that we all have the ability to achieve what we want in this life. We just have to find the right path of who we really are.

So, do I believe that our opinions can change? Yes, because I have changed my opinion about myself. My opinion

now is if you believe in yourself, you can do anything you want to do in this world. As long as you believe in yourself the sky is the limit. I recently passed the GED test and received my diploma in the mail. I will start college this fall and I hope to become a teacher to help others like me.

Teresa Leisure

CHOICES

I am writing this short story to express how happy I am for finally getting my GED. It took 20 years to tell myself that I could do it. I could write a thousand excuses why I didn't do it before but the only real excuse was that I didn't have enough confidence in myself, until now.

I was born September 12, 1967 in East Liverpool, Ohio. My parents divorced when I was very young so I moved a lot back and forth between my mother and father. I changed schools a lot also, never really feeling like I fit in anywhere. School seemed hard when I started my eighth grade year. I started hanging around the wrong crowd and getting in trouble. By the time my eighth grade year was over I was smoking cigarettes and marijuana. When I was a freshman in high school, my grades were bad and the drugs and alcohol got worse. It was more important for me to drink and do drugs than it was to go to school, so after a couple of years as a freshman, I quit.

When I was 18 years old, I met a girl who liked what I liked as far as drinking and going out all the time. We moved in together when we were 19. I worked a lot of odd jobs to support our bad habits and to pay bills. I always lied on job applications on the part about having a diploma. Most of the jobs that I had were minimum wage jobs, or I got paid under the table. The jobs that I had were barely good enough to support my girlfriend and myself, and then we had a child.

When my daughter was born I tried to straighten up. I slowed down on the drinking and the drug use, although I did not quit completely. The money was tight, so I applied for better jobs but was never called. I knew it was because of my lack of education. I always blamed other people for not finishing school, or I would tell myself that it was the

employer's loss for not hiring me. The good job I was hoping to get never came, but another child did. I was 24 years old with a son and daughter to take care of. While having the problems that I had with drugs and alcohol, I took a job as a bartender. I thought things were good, and I finally felt like I fit in somewhere. After a couple of years bartending and drinking the whole time, I became very depressed. I felt like a failure and that I let my family down. I felt so overwhelmed with guilt and fear.

I decided it was time to try to turn my life around, and the first thing I would have to do was stop drinking and doing drugs. It was the hardest thing that I've ever done. The first couple of years we really struggled. I had to go to outpatient rehab and avoid the people, places, and things that made me drink. After being sober a while I started thinking about a lot of things about myself that I didn't realize. I realized that I'm not such a bad person and my life is worth more than just being a drunk. I decided that I wanted to help other people and do something good for my community. I want my children to be proud of me.

I joined the fire department in the town that I live in, and I work security in housing projects, but still something was missing. The house projects that I work security for offered me a very good job. I knew that I needed a G.E.D. in order to get the job. This was something that I put off for a long time because I didn't think I was smart enough; then it all hit me. I went to fire school and passed my entire test, and I went to school for private security and graduated at the top of my class. I told myself that I need to do this, not just for the good job, but just to reassure myself that I can do it.

This G.E.D. test is so important to me. It will be one of the best accomplishments that I have done since I got sober. I started going to day and evening classes at a church in the town that I grew up in. My two teachers are very

understanding and helped me work on the things that I needed to work on. They explain things in detail, and they take their time to make sure you're doing things right.

After going to the classes, I feel very confident about taking the G.E.D. test, and a lot of it has to do with my teachers. I shared some things that happened to me in my life and how I got to where I am today. They asked me if I would write a short story of how I got to where I am today, and I felt proud. I'm 37 years old now, but I realize that you're never too old to learn, and you should never think that you're not smart enough to accomplish something.

I'm a proud and confident person today. I've learned that a person can accomplish whatever they set out to do. The only failure that you can have is if you don't try.

Donald Menough

CONTRASTS IN EDUCATION

I came to Cleveland one year ago. At the end of this confusing first year, I can truthfully say that I have gotten used to the way of life here in the United States. I like the people, the customs, and the culture. There have been many interesting moments stored in my memory.

One of my biggest shocks occurred on my regular trips to buy produce at the West Side Market. I became aware of the lack of mathematical ability in the average American. For Chinese people like me, simple operations such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division are easily done in our heads. I discovered this was not the case here. When I purchased produce worth around three dollars and gave the seller a ten-dollar bill, he was unable to subtract in his head and give me the needed seven dollars change. Instead he took a pile of bills from his pocket and proceeded to count out ten dollars and then take out three and then count out the remaining seven dollars to give to me. The frequency of such events happening astonished me.

On the other hand, I have been amazed at how ingenious Americans are. I base this assessment on the fact that the majority of Nobel Prize winners this year and in past years has been from the United States. I am forced to ask myself why the Chinese people, who have an excellent foundation of knowledge, don't produce this kind of genius. My analysis has produced two main explanations. First, China doesn't offer its scholars an opportunity to do serious research. This is evident in the fact that so many Chinese scholars are pursuing their academic ambitions here in the United States. Secondly, the Chinese educational system is lacking when compared to that of the United States. We emphasize high scores but ignore skill building. We follow a set educational model thereby discouraging the creative

potential of the individual. The Chinese think the basics are essential whereas in the United States students are allowed to pursue pure theoretical research.

There is much that is inconsistent, but there is no doubt in my mind that we Chinese, despite our intellect, have much to learn from the educational system here in the United States.

Danhui Long

TURNING AROUND

It's been six months
And I'm still in school
I went through this once
But I was acting a fool
Now I'm back on track
And ain't no stoppin' me now
Family love it and haters just frown
Sometime in May I'll be walkin' dat stage
With a future of nothin' but g'ttin' paid!

Anthony Jackson

THE INSPIRATION

Becky is a woman of great strength, love, compassion, and intelligence. Because of these characteristics she greatly touches the lives of all she comes in contact with. How do I know this? I'm one of the lives she has touched. I have known Becky for nearly two years, and she has become one of my dearest friends.

Becky has demonstrated great strength of character. She stands up for her beliefs. She supports the clients she serves. She never backs down from a challenge. When things get tough and most people would break, Becky keeps her head held high and continues.

Becky's demonstration of love for others is impeccable. I greatly admire the love and support I've watched her give to the clients. The love and support she's given me alone is unbelievable. When I was at my lowest she was there, hand outstretched to help me back to my feet. I don't know if she'll ever realize what that meant to me.

Becky has great compassion for those around her. I can have my biggest smile on but if something is wrong she can always tell. She gives me the strength to pick myself up, dust myself off, and keep going, even if I don't see it as possible. I think I admire her compassionate nature the most. It reminds me there are still a few good people in this world.

Last, but certainly not least, is Becky's intelligence. She is one of the smartest women I know. She knows just what to say in any situation. She also knows when you just need a silent friend. Someone who will just be there. Not too many people can figure that out. When it comes to friendships Becky is brilliant. I am blessed to have her as a friend. She has made my life a better place to be.

I never thought I'd have someone in my life that I would be willing to do anything for, but I was wrong. I never thought someone could make such an impact on my life. I never knew I would trust anyone again. Then came Becky. Thank you, Becky. You've been an inspiration to me and to all others you've come in contact with.

Tara Vargo

U-TURN

I was born in Puerto Rico and raised by my wonderful dad. He would visit me everyday at school. He did not scream, but instead he talked to me. Although my dad was doing a great job raising me, it was time for me to go live with my mom. At the age of nine my mother came to get me so I could come live with her and my other brothers and sisters in the United States. The cold winter and different culture was new to me. In school I was very scared around the Americans, but it was the beginning of my new life. I have four sisters and two brothers, which helped me out a lot to learn the English language.

At the age of 11, we moved from Cleveland to Lorain and my mother enrolled us in Hawthorn Boone. At this elementary school, I got a lot of help from the bilingual teachers, especially Mr. Garcia. I will never forget him because he gave me very good advice that I really didn't pay attention to. He always reminded me to never give up on my education and also not to let go of my future dreams, which were to improve my English language and to graduate. However, now I know that he was right. He also said to me that without a good education I was going to float from one minimum job to another.

I remember my mother wasn't too expressive, but deep inside I knew she was very proud of me when I passed to Admiral King High School with As, Bs, and one C.

Somehow in 12th grade I became very rebellious with different issues in my life. I left my house and went on the wrong routes. I dropped out of the out of the 12th grade. I started off with two jobs, 10 to 12 hours a day. At the age of 18 and a half, I became pregnant with my first son. I am now 33 years old and have five children.

I have spent 12 years of my life seeing others get their diplomas, college degrees, and good paying jobs. Now it's time to better myself. As I grow I learn from my mistakes. You don't stay 18 forever, and one day I just opened my eyes and realized that I am 33 years old , have 5 children that depend on me, and deserve a better life.

It is time for me to stop looking at what I could have been. It doesn't matter how many years have passed. There is always a chance to make a u-turn in life. That is why I am taking G.E.D. classes. After I am done with my G.E.D., I plan to go to college. I will make a better future for me and my children.

Ivette Hernandez

WRITING A POEM

Needed: A subject
A pen
Some paper
Many words
Several sentences
Rhyme
Much thought

I think I'll write a poem.
I hope to make it rhyme.
Much thought I'll have to give this.
It may take some time.

First I need a subject
That I can write about.
When the right one comes to mind,
I'm sure I'll have no doubt.

Armed with pen and paper,
A must to keep around,
Words that come to mind
I quickly jot them down.

With words I'll make sentences
That I'll switch and move around,
Hoping that the end result
Will have the perfect sound.

Carol Rudder

RECIPE FOR GETTING A GED

1 determined student
1 caring teacher
2 cups positive attitude
5 ½ cups great effort
1 ¾ cups consistency
4 tablespoons hard work
3 ¼ cups study skills
3 cups desire
¾ cup patience
1 ½ cups basic skills
5 cups confidence
5 ¼ cups perseverance
5 ¾ cups belief in yourself
scoop of accomplishment
heap of opportunity

Mix together one determined student, one caring teacher, positive attitude, and great effort. Spread in consistency, hard work, and study skills. Chop in desire and patience. Fold in basic skills and confidence. Stir in perseverance and belief in yourself.

Bake until knowledge is complete. Frost with accomplishment. It will yield opportunities and a better future.

*ABLE Class, Live Oaks
Lety Cornell
Nina Chesser
Missy Franz
Maria Thomas
Tonya Chadwick
Tonya Charles
Michelle Underwood*

THE TWELVE DAYS OF ABLE CLASS

On my first day of ABLE class,
My new friend gave to me
Hope of getting a GED.

On my second day of ABLE class,
My new friend gave to me
Two shots of wisdom,
And hope of getting a GED.

On my third day of ABLE class,
My new friend gave to me
Three questions,
Two shots of wisdom,
And hope of getting a GED.

...Four rays of hope...

...Five learning techniques...

...Six confidence builders...

...Seven students listening...

...Eight pats on the back...

...Nine tutors teaching...

...Ten testers testing

...Eleven students passing...

...Twelve caps and gowns...

ABLE Class, Live Oaks

<i>Jessica Barton</i>	<i>Kelly Bond</i>	<i>Sheila Pittman</i>	<i>Susan Fugett</i>
<i>Tonya Chadwick</i>	<i>Jin Hui Dulle</i>	<i>Dorothy Jones</i>	<i>Art Massengill</i>
<i>Nina Chesser</i>	<i>Kum Sun Kim</i>	<i>Maria Thomas</i>	<i>Lety Cornell</i>
<i>Lisa Smith</i>	<i>Jacob Saylor</i>	<i>Tonya Charles</i>	

PEN TO PAPER

Put your pen to the paper
And you will see
How creative you can be.

Words can take you to exotic places,
And while you're reading a novel
You can paint your character's faces.

Words are such a powerful thing,
For without them there
Would be no music to sing.

So, put your pen to the paper
And you will see
How creative you can be.

Words can be filled with so much emotion,
Those 3 little words, "I love you"
Are always said with devotion.

Words make you happy and glad
Words can also make you angry and sad.

So put your pen to the paper
And you will see
How creative you can be.

Words can put a smile on someone's face
Especially if you do it with style and grace.

Laura Disbro

