

BALANCING AMBITION AND PATIENCE

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Wake up. Get ready. Go to work or school all day. Come home and continue to work. Go to bed. Does this describe a typical day for you? For many Americans, life seems to progress in speed each day. They continually undergo increasing demands and pressure, while slowly losing sight of the true meaning and enjoyments in life. We become robots, going through the same motions each day, but never satisfied. There is always someone or something bigger and better that forces us to strive to perform with greater intensity and dedication than ever before. The high standards and expectations set can never be reached fast enough.

While there are obviously positive results that may come from being an ambitious and hard working individual, they do not come without a cost. This cost is something that may not always be recognized, but is nevertheless real and responsible for many unhappy families all over the United States. Our lives become so revolved around working that we tend to neglect the simple treasures that are present in our lives every day. As much as we try to accomplish as much as we can and as perfectly as possible each day, we must realize that there are times that we must stand aside and simply allow time to work its sweet magic.

One of the most important life lessons I have been taught is to balance ambition and patience. At times, I have set so many goals for myself that I would like to achieve and changes I would like to help make that it becomes overwhelming. I get so caught up in what I don't have accomplished that I become irritated and lose track of reality-life, as it is today.

My mother has played a vital role in allowing me to realize this. I used to come home each day stressed out and thinking only of all the things I had yet to accomplish. As a result, I was not very happy and only continued to expect more and more from myself. One day, when I came home, instead of trudging up to my room, to begin to tackle the huge load of work I had ahead of me, I decided to sit down at the kitchen table and grab a snack for a little energy boost. This is when I observed my mom, who has always had an endless list of things to do written out for herself, crawling around on the floor with my three-year-old brother playing with his latest action figures. This was not unusual, but at that time it inspired me.

I saw the dishes half done, heaps of laundry still waiting to be washed, and no sign that dinner had been started, or even thought about. And then I saw my mom relaxing and enjoying herself with my younger brother. They were both laughing and it made me wonder about the last time I loosened up a bit and had some fun with my family. Had I been so caught up in my work that I had neglected to spend some of the precious time I had with the people whom I love? Had I mistakenly and unknowingly put my work and own personal goals as higher priority than the people who showed me unconditional love and care each and every day of my life? This not the person I wanted to be. I did not want to look back on my life and remember it as work. I wanted to make enjoyable memories with my family each and every day that I would be able to hold with me until the day I died.

I came to the revelation that the world truly would not come to an end if I started my

English paper a little late. The sky would not come crashing down around me if I did not have the entire prom planned out yet, which was still months away. Today's society makes us feel as though we must push ourselves to the absolute limit in order to be successful. It is easy to fall into this trap, since we would all like to consider ourselves accomplished; however, there must be a limit to this demanding lifestyle. The truth is that we must have patience. We cannot expect to get everything done in one day and, in reality, there really is no need for it to be. We control the pressure that we put on ourselves. We choose the way we spend our days.

At the end of the day, as I think about my experiences, I am proud of the work I have accomplished, but this type of satisfaction bears no weight when compared to the immense gratefulness I have for being able to spend another day with those that I love. All of the other things will work themselves out, eventually. The people that you care about and who get you up each morning will not be around forever. Why waste the little time that we have bogged down with worries that, in the end, will have no large effect on our lives? There is a balance between being ambitious and being patient; one that can be the deciding factor in how we reflect upon our lives. Work hard, but also take the time to enjoy the beautiful life that you are so blessed to have. Look to the future, but cherish the moments that you are experiencing here and now.