

One of the core reasons I want to pursue a master's degree is that I want to be in a better position to teach and mentor others. I believe my strong desire to help others comes from my own personal history.

As an adult with Tourette's Syndrome, I find that people are generally accepting of my disorder. But this was not always the case. When I was eight years old, I began to develop a barking cough and other random vocalizations and small movements. My parents took me to several doctors, but the consensus was that I had a "nervous tick" and that it would go away as I grew older. This put the problem on me as it was something I should be able to control. I couldn't. My self image eroded, and my strange movements and sounds caused my peers to push me to the margins. I became very lonely and very depressed. My grades fell, and fell. By the time I got out of high school, I was barely passing. This left me with the feeling that maybe I just wasn't cut out for school.

In spite of these challenges, I continually searched for outlets for my creative energy. My bedroom and back yard at my mom's house were the workshop and staging ground for many projects. I made short films, crazy Rube-Goldberg style booby traps, a geodesic dome out of bamboo. After reading Kerouac's *On The Road*, I rebuilt a Volkswagen Bug and drove it on a cross-country road trip.

When I was about twenty years old, I was finally diagnosed with Tourette's Syndrome. This really helped turn my life around. I spent a few summers volunteering at a camp for kids with Tourette. I got my first experience in pitching an idea (and getting funding) for building a 9-foot high geodesic dome out of copper pipe that the campers skinned with a map of the globe made with paper and poster paint.

I eventually decided to go to school and get my bachelor's degree. My difficult experience in school meant that I had never developed proper study habits. I went to the Learning Disability Center on campus to take classes so I could learn strategies to help me tackle school. It worked. For the first time in my life, I was getting B's and A's instead of D's and F's.

Though I had many hurdles which had held me back, I also had some great opportunities to point me in the right direction. My first teaching experiences were as an assistant in the art classes my mom taught at UCLA and Otis. In the years that followed which included me getting my bachelor's degree, I continued to teach through local community education programs to keep refining my skills.

I enjoy teaching. I really like helping a person find that spark of insight that makes them raise themselves up one notch in their potential. I believe my variegated experience will make me an effective teacher and an asset to whatever program I ultimately attend.