

A Better Life for Me and My Family

by Debra Stewart

I am making a transition in life. I'm going back to school to get my GED. A good job is very hard to get without a GED. It seems like nobody even wants to talk to you unless you have a high school diploma. There are other things that make it hard to find a good job, also. My age is against me because I'm 41 years old. Many employers do not want to take the time to teach the skills I need for a job. Others don't want to hire me because I am a single mom. They don't believe I will attend work faithfully because my children at home also need me.

I've been managing without a high school degree for a long time, but it gets harder and harder every year. When I first started working, I got jobs like working in a greenhouse, babysitting, and cleaning houses. These jobs were nothing to hold on to. When I was twenty six, I had my first son and went on welfare. I stayed at home with him until he was a year old. I worked for my welfare assistance by participating in the County Work Experience Program.

Then, I had some more odd jobs. I was off and on welfare for ten years, and then I had my last son.

I went through another program through welfare called Pathways that helped me find a job where I worked for three years. This was the longest lasting job I ever held. After losing that job, I found a job dishwashing. After a year, they wanted me to cook. I love to cook, so I did that for another year. However, there were problems with the other cooks. I started feeling disrespected at work and felt that I had to leave. I had to go on welfare again. I really didn't want to, but I had no choice because I had to support my family.

My welfare worker talked me into going back to school even though it's been over twenty years since I was in school. Public assistance is giving me the income and support to do this for myself and my family. I need to set a good example for my children. When my son turned fifteen, he wanted to quit school. All I can do is be a model to him by going back to school. It helped a lot. He now has a new attitude. I am happy because now he goes to school everyday.

So this brings me to where I am at right now. I really need my GED for myself and for my family. Two factories in my town just closed down, so earning my GED is necessary for a better job and a better life. I think that what I am doing right now is a good transition as well as a necessary one for myself and my family.

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Debra Stewart is a forty-one year old single mom, from Lorain County, Ohio. She has two sons, fifteen and five. She is determined to pursue her goals. Getting her GED is one of them.