

Real Life Struggles

by Samuel Perez

I started taking classes because I want to better myself. I know that I have to give myself a chance to learn; it's not going to happen in one night. So I have to be patient with myself. I have noticed that my spelling has improved, which is great. Also, when I read a book, I find it's easier to read. I just hope that I do not give up. I used to go to a reading and writing program in San Francisco in the late 70s. I had one-on-one sessions with a tutor. They lasted for one hour, two times a week. Then I would go to another tutor and study at his house for an hour. I went for about six months, and then I dropped out because I was ashamed of myself, and I did not want anyone to know.

The old shame feeling is somewhat over now because I see that I am not the only person who does not know how to spell and read. Participating in Write to Read with all my classmates helps me a lot. We all rely on each other. We help each other with our homework. We all get along with each other. Being with other learners has made it possible for me to make a commitment to myself: I will not drop out of this program until I know how to spell better.

One challenge I face is my work hours. I have to be at my job at six o'clock in the morning every day, and I work 10 ½ hours a day. I have to push myself to do my homework, and most of the time I just try to do it. If I had a title like Air Conditioner

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Repair person, then I know that I would be getting paid good money by the hour. This way, I could spend less time at work and more time doing my homework. That



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would make life just a little bit easier for me.

I have other obligations as well. I have a disabled brother who is 59 years old; he contracted spinal meningitis when he was 6 months old. My mother had a stroke 2 years ago which left her almost blind. I go every day to see her, so she doesn't think that I forgot about her. My father likes to go shopping for food, so I take him, and this way he gets out of the house. Then, when I get a chance, I do my homework if I am not too tired.

Taking this course will help me. When I cannot figure out how to write a word, I know that I can ask one of my classmates to help me out. They will sound out the words, hoping that I can hear the sound. I get a good feeling when I am able to write down a new word!

Samuel Perez has been part of Write to Read in Fremont, CA, since 2005. He is an active participant in the program and recently started leading his own peer reading group. For more information about Write to Read, see p. 46.