

TIPS

I Learned from My Classmates

by J. Francisco Altamirano R.

You can hear them at the break time. While laughing and joking, my classmates are talking about their roles in life: parenting, work, and many other obligations. I have been with them for a quarter of the school year — enough time to know how they make class a priority even when a huge number of activities demand their attention.

When I started my English language classes, I felt the challenge of becoming a successful student. I wondered how I would stay in classes while having a full-time job. At that point, I knew I was at a crossroads; I had to decide whether or not to stay in the English program. I chose to observe my classmates, most of whom are in a similar situation to mine. I wanted to find some clues to help me not to give up my journey as an adult student. The attitudes I observed in others gave me four secrets to success that I have grouped in the acronym **TIPS**.

Think Big!

The letter “T” stands for “Think big.” I saw the positive attitudes my classmates had as they stretched to overcome obstacles. I felt, for example, as if Kazuyo, a student from Japan, was telling me, “Francisco, you’ll never reach any bigger than you can dream. Your dreams will determine what you can accomplish.” Kazuyko’s attitude came across clearly to me: “As long as you think of the good things that are possible, you will see the obstacles become stepping stones in your road.” The “T,” for “Think big,” reminds me to aspire to complete all my goals as an adult student.



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Insist on Perseverance!

But to have a dream of achieving something is not enough. Jaime, a gentleman from Mexico, showed me by his example to persevere. I believed that was a good factor to add to my list.

I thought of the letter “I” meaning: “Insist on perseverance.” I imagined myself being like the little ants in the garden trying to keep going until their goal was achieved.

Pardon Yourself!

Betty, a classmate from Mexico, gave me another clue to success. The letter “P” is the right one to introduce her suggestion to “Pardon yourself.” Betty’s attitude is really optimistic. She told me, with her natural optimism reflected in her face, that she used to go to her daughter’s kindergarten class to

be a volunteer. One morning when she was giving some instructions in English to one of the children, he answered her, "Sorry, but I don't understand Chinese." She tells this experience because she wants to remind us that even when she faces challenges to speak a second language fluently, she kept in her mind that, when somebody is trying to do their best, errors will come.

The attitude of a perfectionist is not a good companion on the road to success. I could imagine Betty telling me that most of the great heroes of the world had learned from their failures. They too had to pardon themselves. I think that this kind of message is a good one to write down and read from time to time.

Safeguard the Lessons!

The last tip that I learned from my classmates, comes from Larisa, a student from Russia, whose example as a disciplined adult student inspired me to "safeguard the lessons that I've learned." With her encouraging attitude, she is advising me to remember the life lessons I have learned and to implement them today and in the future. "Safeguard the lessons" is the meaning of "S", the last letter in **TIPS**.

To to help me keep going in my English classes and to remember the wonderful attitudes of my classmates, I have written down the four letters with their meanings:

- T** Think big;
- I** Insist on persistence;
- P** Pardon yourself;
- S** Safeguard your lessons.

I hope these **TIPS** will inspire you to success too!

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Try This

Write the letters of your name in a vertical line on the left side of this column. Use each letter as the first letter of a word that describes a quality that helps you stay in school.
