My Love/Hate Relationship with Math

Rodolfo Gonzalez

BEFORE YOU READ: "Stats" is short for statistics. What stats (in sports, the economy, personal health) do you follow in your life?

I have a love/hate relationship with math. In math class, I struggled. Even when I used to study and practice, I still couldn't do it. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't figure it out. During my time in school, math was my biggest problem. I did okay in all my other classes, but I failed in math.

Hate

To this day, I'm still battling with "school" math, and I'm always working on getting better. School math is more complicated and more abstract. It seems like the math we learn in school has nothing to do with the real world. For example, in elementary school I remember being timed when answering math questions. And I remember the pressure of having to answer math problems on the board in front of the class. Talk about anxiety-provoking! Even in my GED class, if I miss a day of class, then I fall behind with my math knowledge.

Love

When it comes to math in the real world, that's a different story. For example, when I look at my paycheck and count my hours, I'm excited to see how much money I made during my pay period.

Also, I love sports, and I use numbers to track how I'm doing. Every time I play basketball, I love to count my stats to see how well I did in that game. At the end of the season, I check my averages for the season. In basketball or any other sport, the averages show how well you played during the season and how much you improved. Some averages I calculate are: my points by game, assists, and rebounds. All those averages show how well-rounded you are as a player. It also shows what you need to work on. I realized that I'm pretty good at scoring, but need to work on my rebounds more.

When math is in the form of data that applies to our everyday life, it's much more fun and doesn't make me anxious.

Numbers are all around us. Math is important for our society to be functional. Some days I'm good at it, and other days I'm not so good at it; most of the time, it depends on the situation I'm in. This sums up my love/hate relationship with my greatest foe: math.

Rodolfo Gonzalez is a student at the Pascua Yaqui Tribe Adult Education Program in Tucson, AZ. He is 23 years old and an enrolled member of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe. He is currently in GED classes and plans to become an EMT once he obtains his GED. He has a nine-month-old son and a dog named Taz.

Be Careful of Statistics

Let's say Jim, on average, got 1 rebound and scored 2 points per game in his first season. In his second season, he doubled those numbers. He had a 100% improvement in his stats. Now consider Mary. In her first season, she made an average of 10 rebounds and 20 points per game. This year, she improved her average by 20%. Who would you rather have on your team and why? If you only knew the % improvement in each player's average, what would that number hide?

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