

No Thanks to You, Mrs. J

Nicole Sweet

BEFORE YOU READ: Do you have a teacher who treated you badly? Describe him or her.

For as long I can remember, I always had a tough time with math. Numbers just didn't make sense. I honestly believed I couldn't do math. My experiences with math have left me ashamed and unable to learn through traditional methods.

Her breath smelled like day-old coffee with sour milk.

When I was fifteen, I was humiliated by my math teacher. I would stay after school, and Mrs.

I would go over every detail of the day's lesson. I would sit at my desk and she would scream at me. Her breath smelled like day-old coffee with sour milk. She would spit every time she talked. One day, I said, "I don't get this. I don't understand!" Mrs. J replied, "Enough!" And she slapped me right across the face. I felt the sting of the slap, but the surprise and anger were worse. I never wanted to see math or Mrs. J's face again.

This experience affected my ability to learn math. I never progressed beyond elementary math. As an adult, my lack of skill has affected me in some negative ways. I couldn't do math in a restaurant where I worked as a hostess. I was unable to calculate the 18% tax on liquor sales and compute the day's final sales. I also struggled with taking 5% out from the wait-staff's tips to give to the bus help. We did the work with a calculator on a paper spreadsheet. But I didn't know how to find percentages on a calculator. I realized that I definitely couldn't go on to a higher paying job.

Even though I had such a difficult time, I believe I can overcome my struggle with math. The first step was joining Wellspring's Adult Learning Initiative program. It's very hard, but I have found a teacher who believes in her students. She

explains things thoroughly, she allows us to use manipulatives, and she is very patient. I'm starting to believe in myself. Even though I have struggled with math, my future looks bright. My struggles have made me stronger.



Nicole Sweet is a student at Wellspring House in Gloucester, MA. She lives in Gloucester and works at a local hotel. She is currently enrolled in North Shore Community College for the fall, where she plans to study respiratory therapy.

Help Nicole Calculate

Nicole has a paper spreadsheet and a calculator. How could she calculate the 18% sales tax on liquor sales? And the 5% of tips due to the bus help?

Day	Total Liquor Sales	18% Tax on Liquor	
		Your Estimate	Calculated Amount
Mon.	\$896		
Tues.	\$1008		
Weds.	\$1042		
Day	Total Tips	5% for Bus Help	
		Your Estimate	Calculated Amount
Mon.	\$340		
Tues.	\$412		
Weds.	\$491		