

Embarrassed and Sick to My Stomach

Courtney Martin



Motivation (n)
the desire to do something

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. What is your motivation for being in school?
2. How does anxiety make it hard to learn? Share a time when an emotional problem made it hard to learn.

Math makes me anxious. It started in grammar school. My teachers and family wondered why I didn't understand the classwork, but I couldn't explain it to them. I felt frustrated.

I had a hard time in school because I felt scared.

Looking back, I think I had a hard time in school because I felt scared. My mom's boyfriend abused me, so I went into foster care when I was very young, and I spent time in four different foster homes.

The family that finally adopted me was verbally and physically abusive. They called me fat and retarded. In high school, I got up at 3:00 in the morning to get all my chores done before school. In school, I worried that I had done the chores wrong or forgot something. I was nervous all day in school about what my adoptive parents would say to me. It was hard to pay attention.

Today, as an adult, sometimes I don't understand the assignment. The anxiety comes back. I get a sick feeling in my stomach. I think other students might make fun of me. I need help on each and every question. But now is not the same

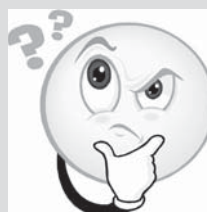
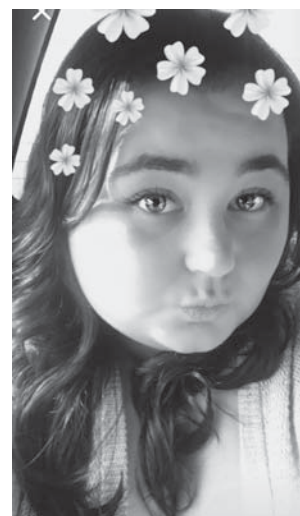
as when I was a kid. When I feel lost, I don't completely shut down like I did in school. I re-read the question. I try to partner with someone, so I can get help and we can help each other. I study more at home. I ask the teacher for help, and I go online and look at Khan Academy and other videos on YouTube. It doesn't always work. But I have more resources now. I am in therapy, and I have a boyfriend who listens to me and treats me well.

I wish I didn't have this fear of math from childhood, but supportive friends help, and I'm not giving up that easily. My biggest motivation is that I really want my HiSET, because I want a better future for myself.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. According to the author, how did she develop a "fear of math"? What is she doing about it?
2. Read the story on p. 8. What do Betsy and Courtney have in common? What is different?

Courtney Martin is a student at the Methuen Adult Learning Center in Methuen, MA. She is currently a CNA, and she would like to become a phlebotomist.



Math Strategy:

Re-read the question.
Work with a partner.
Ask for help!