

FIGHTING TO FOCUS

TAMECA CHANDLER

I want to improve more in class, but it is difficult. I am thinking about my kids all the time.

The struggle I am having now is at school. I am losing focus. I have a lot on my mind. I also have 2 kids at home to take care of and I am doing it all on my own. I have to wake up at 4:30 in the morning to go to work. At night, I go to school from 6 to 9PM.

I want to improve more in class, but it is difficult. I am thinking about my kids all the time. My oldest daughter is in Antigua. She is growing up without me and this is very hard on me. I cannot sleep at night. I'm also worrying about my twins. I want them to have a good education. I want to raise them up in the right way.

It's not easy, but I am going to do it. It's very important to keep on trying. If you give up, you're going to be a failure. If you keep fighting, at the end, you'll know you have done it. In life, don't give up on yourself! This is my struggle in my life.

Tameca Chandler is from Antigua. She came to the U.S. in 2015. She lives in the Bronx and goes to school at Lehman College ALC. She loves to help others.



■ UNDOCUBUS. No Papers, No Fear: Ride for Justice, Phoenix, Arizona, 2012 (Photographer unknown)

Undocumented immigrants experience deportation, harassment from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), silent raids, and long detentions. On July 29, 2012, the UndocuBus, of the "No Papers, No Fear campaign," started on a journey from Phoenix, Arizona, to Charlotte, North Carolina, where the Democratic National Convention took place. The two-month bus tour raised awareness about anti-immigration policies. The riders were "undocumented and unafraid" people from all over the country, including people going through deportation proceedings. How would it affect your ability to focus at school if you or someone you were close to was struggling with their immigration status? Read more about immigration in Issue #38 of *The Change Agent*.

Help me, Mom!

Abir Yousef

BEFORE YOU READ: What English words are helpful when you are doing math “in English”?

When I was a small girl, I said, “Mom, please help me with my math homework.” I didn’t have any-

Now I learn English to help me in math.

one to help me. She cried because she didn’t go to school when she was a girl. This was so hard for

me. I practiced by myself for a long time. I feel I am strong in life. Math is important. I did well in math. I remember my teacher in school told me, “In the future, you must study to be an engineer.”

My children like math and they do well too. Sometimes they tell me, “Mom, please help us.” But I feel sad because it is hard to help them. I need more English. When my children were small, I could teach them math. As they’ve gotten older,

some of the problems are too hard. Some-

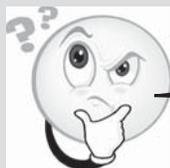
times, it takes me one hour to find the right answer. Now I learn English to help me in math also. I use math all

the time in my life. I like math. I want to find a job very fast and math will help.



Abir Yousef is a student at the IRIS Mother & Child ESOL Program in New Haven, CT. She is from Syria, where she studied psychology at Damascus University. When she went to Jordan, she worked for the International Rescue Committee helping refugees. Now she wants to study to be an ultrasound technician in the USA and work part-time because she has seven children.

AFTER YOU READ: Think of more ways of expressing the math problems in the box below (left). Try using phrases like “more than” and “less than.”



Math Strategy:
Learn these math words!

Addition (+) example: $65 + 35 = 100$
65 plus 35 equals 100.
The sum of 65 and 35 is 100.

Subtraction (-) example: $100 - 65 = 35$
100 minus 65 equals 35.
The difference between 100 and 65 is 35.

Multiplication (x) example: $7 \times 8 = 56$
7 times 8 equals 56.
The product of 7 and 8 is 56.

Division (÷ or /) example: $56 \div 8 = 7$
56 divided by 8 equals 7.
8 into 56 is 7.

Many Ways to Say It!

Sylvia has 3 siblings. Dana has 6 siblings. Mario has 1 sibling.

Write two statements comparing the number of siblings that Sylvia, Dana, and Mario have. Use phrases like: more than, less than, twice as many, half as many, etc. Check with your classmates. How many different ways can you express the relationship between the number of siblings that they each have? Draw a picture to help you see the relationships.

Sylvia - ☺☺☺
Dana - ☺☺☺☺☺☺
Mario - ☺

Using Transportation in the U.S. ...

Not Finding My Way with GPS

Adnan Mesrabi

I had been in this country for only two weeks. It was my first day at the University of New Haven. It was very cold. I did not have a car. I did not want to miss my first day at the university. I had only one choice: the train. Inside the train, I was comfortable and warm, but outside the train, I was freezing. I used my GPS to get directions to the university, but I forgot to put my GPS on “walk” mode. I left it in “drive” mode.



It took me to Interstate 95. I was very confused, and I was going the wrong way. I did not know what I could do. I decided to return to the train station and wait for my friends to give me a ride.



GPS uses satellites to calculate your position on Earth.

Adnan Mesrabi is originally from Syria. He left his country in 2012 because of the war. He was a good student. In his last year in high school, he was ranked second in his city. Now he is at student at East Shore Region Adult & Continuing Education in Branford, CT, where he is studying for the TOEFL so that he can go to college.

Sometimes You Just Have to Do It!

Rose Carmelle Sandy Valcin

When I came to the U.S., my husband said to me, “My love, in America you must be independent. You have to be able to go anywhere, sometimes alone.” In my native country, when I wanted to go out, I always found someone to go with me. But in the U.S., people go out alone.

My husband taught me how to drive. I thought it was going to be difficult for me because in America you have to move fast. The day arrived that



I had to drive by myself. I had no choice because I had to get the children to school, and my husband had gone to work early. I took the wheel and I drove! I was really excited (because I was going to drive alone) and angry (because I wasn’t ready). Obviously, my husband thought differently. Thank God, everything went well. Since that day, I learned how to go everywhere I want without the help of my husband. The ease of private transportation is so good, it makes you independent and always ready to go!



Rose C. Sandy Valcin is 28 years old. She is from Haiti, and she has two handsome boys. She earned a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration in the Dominican Republic. She is fluent in Spanish, French, and Creole. Now, she is learning English at Atlantic Technical College in Fort Lauderdale, FL, so that she can get a better job.

Four Immigrants Share their Stories



My First Time Using Public Transportation

Sheldaline Prenelus

When I took the bus for the first time, I was feeling sad because people on the bus kept looking at me. I thought to myself, “What’s wrong? I didn’t do anything!” I felt very uncomfortable! The driver asked if this was my first time taking a bus and I said yes. Then the bus driver laughed. Other people on the bus started laughing too. I thought it was discrimination. My first time on

the bus made me feel a lot of stress.

What did I learn from this situation? If you have to do something, just do it. I needed to go to school, and the only way to get there was by bus. Therefore, I told myself, I must keep using the bus. Of course, my recommendation to alleviate the stress is: if you are going to take the bus for the first time, bring a friend with you!



Sheldaline Prenelus was born in Haiti. She came to the U.S. to have a better education. She is a student at Atlantic Technical College in Ft. Lauderdale, FL, and she studies English. She lives with her family and she really likes to participate in church activities.



Problems with the Bus

Maria D Almeida

I wanted to take the bus to work. I arrived early at the bus station. I tried to get on the bus, but the driver told me to get off. I was so hot. I think the driver wanted to wait inside the bus alone.

Finally, I got on the bus with a driver who was mean. When we came close to the nursing home where I work, I pointed and asked, “Nursing home?” I wanted the driver to stop, but I couldn’t

explain it. The driver turned to me and said, “There are a lot of nursing homes!” He stopped the bus and I got off.

When I wanted to go home, I went to the bus stop, but I was early again. I sat there sweating, and the driver remained inside in the cool air. The man would still not let me on the bus early.



Maria D Almeida is a student in the East Providence Library ESOL program in East Providence, RI. She is from Cape Verde and hopes to get her U.S. citizenship so that her children, who are currently living there, can come live with her.

Bad Habits, Bad Results

Find Me Cange

BEFORE YOU READ: Share a time you had a bad habit. Did it have a bad result?

I remember when I was seven years old, I used to suck my thumb and twirl my hair. I was getting bald on one side of my head, so my mom cut my hair, and I looked like a boy.

I didn't want to go to school because the students laughed at me. Every day, I was crying and sad. I stayed in my home all the time, and I used a hat when I went out with my mother.

To stop me from twirling my hair, my mom put a glove on my hand. She used hair products on my head to make my hair grow out faster. That was a bad experience for me.



Find Me Cange is from Haiti. She is 33 years old. She is a Licensed Nursing Assistant and currently an ESL learner at Southern New Hampshire Services, Portsmouth Adult Education Program in Portsmouth, NH.



Parents, Kids, and Pressure

Read the stories and poems on pp. 42-45. List some of the things that the moms and dads do in these stories. Then list some of the pressures that these parents are under. These pressures might be directly indicated in the text or you might figure out what they are using inference.

Share your own stories of parenting or being parented. What pressures do you experience as a parent? What pressures did your parents experience? What supports do parents need to be able to show love and navigate all the challenging times with their children?



Serve the Same Sauce

Rheteshwary Pathak

BEFORE YOU READ: What do you think the title means?

When I was growing up in India, I was very stubborn. I had my own ideas. I didn't want anyone to tell me what to do.

One day when I was 10 years old, my mom and I were shopping. She stopped at the barber shop. She said she wanted the barber to trim my hair. I *loved* my long beautiful hair. I thought about it, and I said, "Okay, the barber can trim my hair. Maybe that will help it grow faster and longer." I did not know that my mother gave secret instructions to the barber. She asked him to cut my hair to shoulder length! When the barber finished, I was so depressed.

I cried the whole day. I thought about all my beautiful hair – lost! My mother explained that she wanted my hair short because she didn't want to take care of it. She had a lot of chores to do every day. She said she didn't have time to take care of my hair.

I was so upset; I wondered how to get revenge on my mom. Then one day, I saw my mother taking a nap on the porch in the summer afternoon. Here was my chance! I took the scissors and



Rheteshwary Pathak is a student at The Adult Education Center in Hartford, CT. Before coming to the U.S. eight years ago, she worked as a senior merchandiser in the apparel industry. Her hobbies include reading, cooking, and listening to music.

cut my mother's long braid off. I cut her hair the same length that the barber cut mine. When my mother woke up, she looked in the mirror and screamed!

She yelled, "Who did this?" When she saw me, she slapped my face three or four times. Then I said to her, "Now you can understand how I felt when you had my hair cut without telling me!"

AFTER YOU READ: Tell the story of when you "served the same sauce" to someone.