

Practice Makes Perfect

Nicholas Herdzik

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. What do you think of the saying, “Practice makes perfect?”
2. Think about the definitions of these words and phrases: *getting by*, *scoff*, *fortune-cookie advice*, *Asperger’s Syndrome*, *similar-ish*.

Advice from Mom

What has life been like for me? I cannot say it has been awful. I have been *getting by* just fine, but I did struggle a lot when it came to interacting with others. My mother often told me that practice makes perfect, that the more I do something, the better I will get at it. I used to *scoff* whenever she gave me such *fortune-cookie advice*. But then I paid more attention. And now I can say that, although it has taken a while, practice has helped me get closer to perfect.

Having Asperger’s Syndrome

As a kid with *Asperger’s Syndrome*, I had a lot of trouble when it came to meeting people and making friends. When I first moved from the U.S. to a small town in the Czech Republic, I had a lot of trouble talking to my fellow classmates. I

wanted to bond with them over the things I enjoyed back in Connecticut, such as shows I used to watch on Cartoon Network or the old

They just considered me weird and left me alone.

video games I played on my PlayStation 2. They just considered me weird and left me alone.

Unlike me, my older brother had a much more natural social life. He made friends across the neighborhood, played outside with them, and even had sleepovers with them, whereas I only hung out with them because my mom said so and



I had no one else to interact with.

Meanwhile (and rather embarrassingly), it took me a while to learn basic things, such as tying my own shoes or being able to tell time. It did not help that my mother was rather overprotective of me. She did not let me do things that my brother could do at a younger age, like go on scary rides, swim in the deep end of the pool, or stay out as much as 20 minutes over

curfew without her calling the cops out of worry. Like every caring mother, she meant well and loved me, but it definitely affected my self-esteem growing up without friends or basic life skills.

My First True Friend

When I moved to a large town in Scotland, it started off the same. I was unable to make friends, and I wasn't sure how to *get by* in yet another culture. That was until I met my first true friend, or as they say in Scotland, "mate," whom I'll refer to as Tony. Tony himself was a foreigner, hailing from the Czech Republic's neighbor upstairs, Poland. We bonded over our *similar-ish* heritages, our interest in video games and cartoons, as well as our taste in food. He always invited me to hang out with him and a bunch of other friends. We would all go out together during our school breaks, walk around town, hang out at the local mall, and get some sandwiches for lunch at a popular coffee shop. I had never done anything like that before. Tony was a good influence on me, and I still keep in touch with him and the others to this day.

We All Have Our Own Pace

Around the same time I met Tony, my mother became more confident in my abilities, and I was able to become much more independent. I learned to take care of myself, cook my own meals, wash my own laundry, and even manage my own bank account. I eventually moved back to the U.S., and now I live with my dad, learning even more important things such as traveling on my own and driving a car.

In conclusion, everybody learns to do things at a different pace. It is okay to take your time until you are ready to overcome an obstacle. It may sound like *fortune-cookie advice*, but practice truly does make perfect.

AFTER YOU READ: What are some of the challenges Nicholas faces in his life? How does he manage those challenges? Be specific. Cite evidence from the text.

Nicholas Herdzik completed the GED® Preparation Program at Plainville Adult and Continuing Education in Plainville, CT, in 2023. He is an aspiring writer who enjoys good stories in all forms of media and hopes to one day write one of his own for people to cherish.

What Do You Practice?

Practice can be a noun or a verb. As a noun, it means a habit or tradition or a "normal" way of doing something. For example, "It is a common practice for children to start first grade at age six." As a verb, it means doing something repeatedly until you learn it. For example, "I practiced piano for years before I felt comfortable performing in front of people."

Describe something that you regularly practice. It can be a hobby, an aspect of your job, studying, a chore at home (like gardening or cooking), a meditation or spiritual practice, a fitness routine, or any habit that you cultivate in yourself.

How has practice helped you improve? What setbacks have you experienced? What joys? What keeps you practicing?

Develop a slideshow presentation to share your practice with your classmates. Include pictures and descriptions of your practice.