

# Don't Ever Say You Can't Do Something

Cathiana S. Durandisse

## BEFORE YOU READ:

1. What is a missionary? Share what you know.
2. What do you think of the title? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
3. Find Haiti and Jamaica on the map on the next page. What languages are spoken in Haiti? What about in Jamaica?

## I Was Shocked When They Sent Me to Jamaica

I am from Haiti. I applied to serve as a missionary in my country. Somehow, they assigned me to go to Jamaica! I was shocked because they speak English in Jamaica, and I didn't speak English. How would I be able to talk to people?



## Ever and Never

Study these sentences with **ever** and **never**. Then try making your own sentence pairs using **ever** and **never**.

Have you ever been on an airplane?  
No, I never have been.

Nothing ever upsets her. She never looks unhappy.

I will love you forever. I will never forget you.

Evergreens are a type of tree that stays green all year long. They never turn brown.

There is a saying, "Never say never."  
What do you think about this saying?  
What is ironic about it?

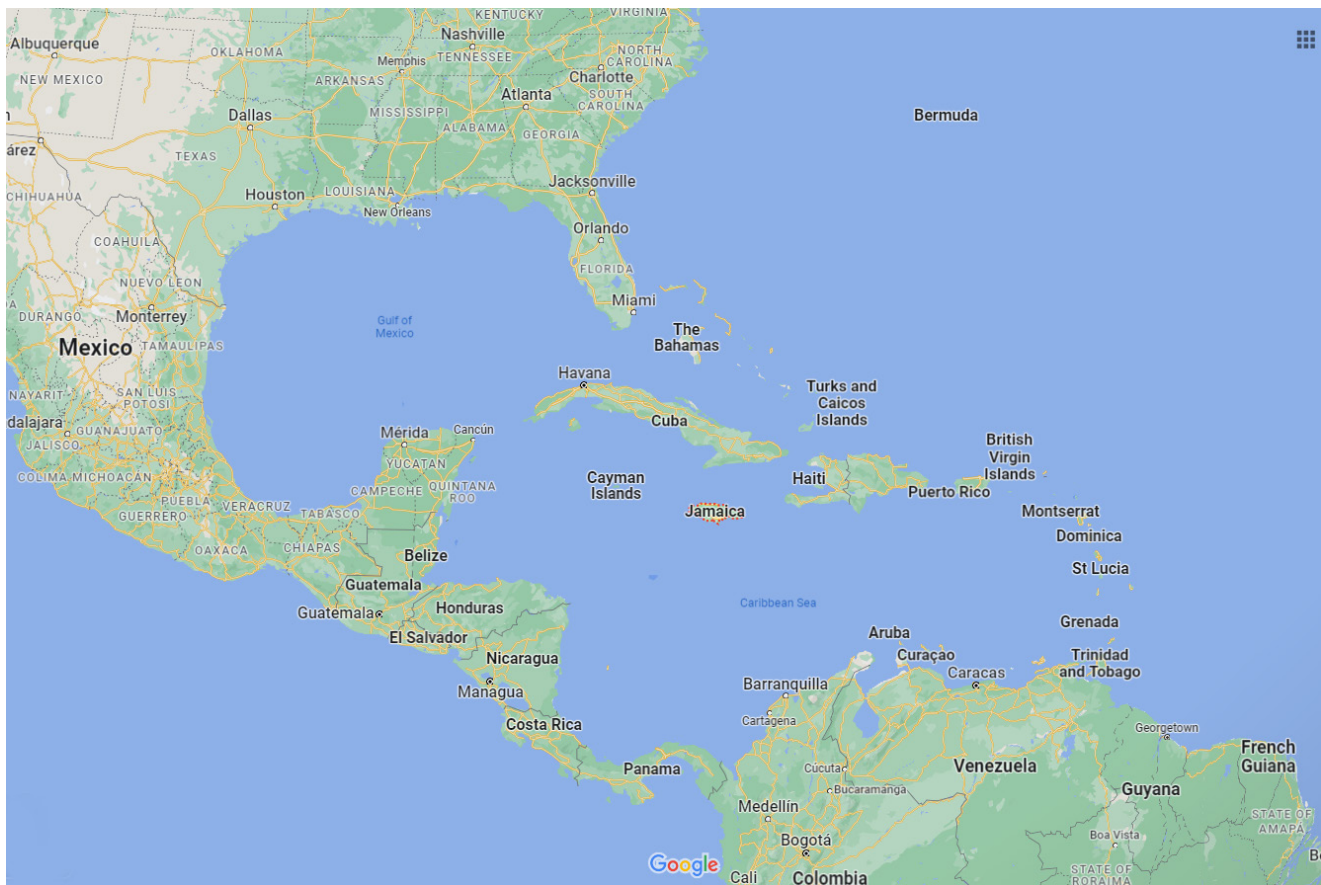
When I arrived in Jamaica, I almost got depressed. It was hard for me to get up every day, knowing that I had to spend my whole day speaking English. It made me want to stay home.

## I Had to Learn English Quickly

One of my roommates encouraged me to study one hour every day. I had a book and a CD that I listened to. She also said I should practice by talking to more people. It was hard in the beginning. People speak really fast. I asked them to slow down and to repeat themselves. I often said, "What does that mean?" After four or five months, I started to understand people better. I could answer them back.

## A New Challenge in the U.S.

Don't ever say you can't do something before you give it a try! Now I speak English more often than my native language. I'm not saying I'm perfect



**Geography and language.** Take some time to share what you know about this region. Research it to learn more. Here are some guiding questions: What two continents can you see parts of on this map? Where are the Caribbean islands? Name three. Which European countries invaded and colonized which parts of the areas you see on this map? What languages are spoken in these areas? Think about both the languages of the colonizers and the indigenous languages. Also consider the creole languages that developed as a mixture of various languages.

in it, but I understand most things. When I came to the U.S., I had a new challenge. I had to learn American English, which sounds different from Jamaican English. There will always be obstacles in our lives, but we can overcome them by believing in ourselves.

**AFTER YOU READ:**

1. What was the main problem Cathiana faced in Jamaica? How did it affect her? How do you know?
2. What did she do about her problem? How did she **adapt** and show **flexibility**. (See p. 3 for definitions of those words.)

3. What lesson did she learn from her experience in Jamaica? Talk about a time you faced an obstacle. What lesson did you learn from it?
4. Interview your classmates about obstacles they have faced and strategies they have used to overcome them. Write an essay about what you learn.

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