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Composition I

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14 September 2025

The Change: How Your Environment Impacts Your Career

“Doubt kills more dreams than failure ever will.”— Suzy Kassem. In my 17 years of life, I have learned that my mind is my biggest flaw. A racing mind, anxious thoughts, feelings of doubt, and perfectionism are all terms I know all too well. As someone who is “picture-perfect” on the outside, she is just a girl battling with her own head. Academics, sports, and my future have been greatly affected by my own thoughts and my drive to succeed in them.

*Green Eggs and Ham* was the title of the book I read aloud to my first-grade class when I was seven years old. One could say I was destined to be a teacher; I just did not know it yet. I volunteered to read this fun story because that was the student I was: bold and always willing to do more and help out. Turns out that very same seven-year-old girl is still inside me today. Even at seven, I had a desire to do more and be the best that I could be. I credit this to growing up with a freakishly smart twin brother, as my whole life has been a competition. He was always naturally smarter than I; the only way I kept up was by working harder than anyone else, including him. This worked for me until the dreaded standardized test all juniors complete, known as the ACT. Long story short, I scored a seventeen on this test, which fell below average. I had one of the lowest scores in my grade; in my mind, I had failed, and I was a disappointment again. This thought stayed with me for the rest of my junior year. My only escape was the thing I love most about my life: volleyball.

In fifth grade, I hated volleyball with a burning passion. My coach dulled my sparkle in every aspect, and I wanted to give up. The following year, the same coach was on the sideline, criticizing my every move, making me feel worthless every day. That was also the year COVID-19 hit our schools, so my season was cut short. I decided to try out for a local volleyball club that was doing a fall season of practices only. Within this opportunity, I found my love for volleyball, and I realized that I was not too bad at it either. After this season, a new dream came to my heart: playing volleyball in college. Five years later, I strive for this goal every day, as this is one of my biggest dreams. Another aspiration that came from this experience was becoming a coach. I have had my fair share of verbal abuse from coaches. Let me explain, I have been called a “basket-case”, basically called worthless at passing, and called out in front of the whole team. I have won awards, and my members of my coaching staff did not even congratulate me because they wanted another player to win them. Her mom was one of the assistant coaches. The favoritism was enough to make you vomit. One of the worst times was when our head coach told us that we were an embarrassment to our program and that she would rather be home with her family than watch this \*bleep\* volleyball. These so-called coaching “role models” are truly just horrible people who need a different career. This enrages me because they can get away with it, and nothing happens. I hope to change that in my own way. A powerful feeling appeared in my mind: future athletes can not be treated like this. So, I became very passionate about giving back to the sport I love so much by coaching. Every time I help with a kids' camp or volunteer at a practice. I strive to be the coach I never had, one who is kind and helpful, instead of abusive and mean. It is crazy to think about how your experiences impact your future choices, especially your career.

If you had told me five years ago that I was planning to become a teacher, I would tell you that you had lost your mind. Growing up, I always wanted to become a doctor. Helping people is a huge passion of mine, and pursuing a career in medicine would undoubtedly make everyone around me proud. The turning point in my career choice was the COVID-19 pandemic. I had months and months without school, and I genuinely missed it. Friends and teachers who felt like family were viewed through screens, and I never fully completed my sixth-grade year. A passion I did not know existed was born. This was all rainbows and sunshine until I had a thought: Will this career be “good enough” for the opinions of those around me?

In the long run, I finally picked the career that was best for me and not those around me. My perfectionist mind finally chose my self-worth and happiness over a large salary and the overbearing opinions of others. To this day, I worry about not being the coach or teacher my students or athletes deserve, because of what I went through and my exposure to this. I may only be 17, but I know one thing: I pour everything I have into teaching and coaching because I wish with all my heart someone had done that for me. Being ripped down all the time by those who are supposed to support and guide you through the game you love so much greatly impacts your mental health. Their cruel words attack all aspects of your game and life, making you question everything about yourself. What you say to students and athletes sticks with them for a lifetime. In my case, it fueled me to be the change I wish to see in the world.