

Determination and Hard Work

Lily (8th grade)

I believe in determination and hard work. The kind of determination and hard work that doesn't stop, doesn't slow, and doesn't wait for anything. The kind that pulls through thick and thin and carries people to the tops of mountains. I am a student. I have an entire future ahead of me, with mountains of my own. I believe that in order to place my flags of triumph atop these mountains, I must steadily and painstakingly climb the rocks of success.

Whenever I think of determination and hard work, I think of the story of one particular boy. A number of years ago, this boy and his brother worked at a local school, lighting fires in the stoves of each classroom to warm the room. One morning, the boy doused the wood with a can of kerosene, while the other lit the fire. Unknown to the boys, the can had been accidentally filled with gasoline; a huge explosion followed, killing one boy and badly burning the legs of the other. When taken to the doctor, the boy was recommended for amputation of his legs. But the boy believed that he really would walk again someday and refused to have his legs amputated. After the bandages were removed, they found that the right leg was nearly three inches shorter than the left, whose toes were nearly burned off. But this young man was determined. Through agonizing pain, he made himself exercise every single day. His hard work was admirable, and slowly, he regained strength in his legs. Finally, he threw out his crutches and was able to walk again. But his determination carried him even further. Those nearly-amputated legs broke the world record for the mile run! This young man's name was Glenn Cunningham, named "World's Fastest Human Being" and athlete of the century at Madison Square Garden.

I've also climbed a couple of my own personal hills. In middle school, I joined the school MATHCOUNTS team. Our little school had only been competing two years, and we hadn't been doing that well. But this year, we were determined to make a difference. In addition to the mound of homework given by other teachers, we had extra math worksheets to complete. We worked hard, staying late after school every week to have team practices. Our coach gave us old competition problems to practice with, and we competed against each other as practice for the individual rounds. It was indeed hard work. But when we arrived at the district competition, all of it paid off. We came in first place! And once our wheel started rolling, it didn't stop. At the state championships, we came in first place yet again, and then we plowed on to the national competition, representing Virginia. What a success! And it wouldn't have happened if we were not determined and didn't take the extra steps of hard work.

This experience in my life reinforces my belief in the power of hard work that can take people anywhere they want to go, as long as they have the determination to work for it. No amount of riches or wealth can give the kind of satisfaction that a success due to determination and hard work can. Only high aspirations, eagerness to work, and the determination to see a job through will give a person the power to take on any obstacles in his or her path – the power to climb the highest of mountains and the rockiest of trails. Without this sense of determination and hard work there can be no successes to be proud of, neither technological advancements nor personal goals.

I believe that it is only through determination and hard work that we can succeed in life. We ought to be like Glenn Cunningham, who would have been left as a cripple all his life had he not had the determination to work hard and to make his belief a reality. We all need to work our hardest in order to win. There's no way to reach the top of the mountain except by climbing the rocks one by one.