

Course change

“ I came to varsity with some clue of what to expect but to my surprise ... when I arrived here I experienced personal problems. I never knew these problems could affect my academics in such a big way ... Luckily I was not alone. I decided to seek help and use some of the resources that are available and I chose Student Counselling.

Through the support I got there I managed to deal with my problems both personally and academically. I ended up deciding to follow my dreams and changed to the course that I have always wanted to do even though the salary scale is much lower compared to the original career path that I had first chosen. I am now coping with my studies...I am a true living example of the statement “IF I CAN, YOU CAN” nothing impossible, especially if you set your heart on it. ”

“IF I CAN...YOU CAN”

The authors of these original stories have given Student Counselling permission to share these publically

Culture shock

“ I remember the first day I came to university. I did not know anyone and I was so lost ... Here I was, coming from this 'big' township environment where everybody is doing what he or she wants. Prior to university, I had never encountered cultural diversity - let alone studying with white people where I had to make sure that the language I speak was up to standard - in other words, my English had to be perfect at all times...

When I look back and I remember those days when it was very difficult but ...the counsellors and the peer helpers managed to inculcate an 'I can attitude' in me.

As young people we need mentors and role models who will understand us and encourage us when we make mistakes - that was the kind of love and understanding that I got from the counsellors ... I am so positive with my life I am prepared to face any storm that comes my way.

... those workshop where they taught us ...life skills ... I have all those skills because in the workplace these days they need someone with interpersonal skills. ...How can I forget the opportunity of going overseas because of the Peer Help Programme ... I am proud that I got what I wanted which of course was my degree and now I am doing my Masters degree.

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Bouncing back

“ I am a postgraduate student who successfully completed my undergraduate degree in record time ... A few years ago, if you had told me I would be where I am today, I would have laughed at you ... I don't think I would have been here, alive, if it were not for counselling ... I use to have the mentality that counselling was aimed at people who had 'lost their minds' or who were considered 'crazy.' I use to suffer from depression. Feelings of helplessness, worthlessness, anxiety and fear plagued my life. I did not choose the circumstances I found myself in....

When I look back, I can actually say that some of the things that happened to me were 'unfair.' ... Although I did not choose the negative events that happened to me, I chose what I would do about the events and how I would react to these events.

We all have choices. We can decide the path that each of us will follow. These choices will shape our future ... We can't always solve all our problems on our own - we need support and guidance. ”

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Some days were better than others

“ A stroll along the beach to clear my head by taking in a breath of fresh air turned out to be the worst day of my life. I was raped. I’ve never ever felt so dirty, used, violated...and impure. I felt cheap, unworthy...hated myself, I blamed myself... I kept saying, “If only I had not” ...

My friends suggested that I go for counselling. I was against this. I was sceptical about going to someone, knowing everything I was most probably going to be told. ...

But I went and slowly I let go and opened up Some days were tougher than others and the depression came and went ... it was a roller-coaster ride ... Not only did I regain my strength but I also grew as a person and got to know myself. ”

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Achieving the IMPOSSIBLE

“ I grew up in a village so I attended a poor school with no resources ... I was an average student. Due to hard work I managed to pass my matric ... with a school leaving certificate which was not good enough, but I did not give up. I had to do a bridging course to be admitted for my degree at university ... While I was doing the bridging course I fell pregnant and things got even tougher ...I was weighed down by this big change in my life - I was only 21 when I fell pregnant. My grades dropped ...because of high stress levels. I even failed some of the modules Luckily I had a great support system, my friends my lecturers ... my student counsellor ... they helped me a lot by encouraging me not to give up.

In my first year I achieved what I never thought possible! I passed all my modules with only two that were below 60%. I got 4 distinctions. I was one of the best students in my course that year. I must say I surprised myself.

I am currently in my final year at university. ”

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I know who I am

What good is a dream if a man's reach cannot exceed his grasp –

Unknown

“ I grew up in a big family with a small budget and even smaller house As far as I can remember, it was always my dream to study ... Unfortunately my family's financial circumstances would not allow me to pursue further education...

After school I came face to face with the reality of lengthy periods of unemployment. I managed to secure a job at a local small business doing deliveries.

After five years, I managed to get a job as a messenger at an attorney's firm. ... I registered for a part-time degree but...as fate would have it, I experienced personal difficulties. I lost sight of my dreams and responsibilities and resorted to experimenting with substances and risky drinking. ...

Six years ago I enrolled myself at university again, once more as a part-time student. I needed to work full-time to provide for myself. With dogged determination, a healthy dose of self-belief and the financial, emotional and spiritual support of God, my employers, friends, family and colleagues I managed to complete my undergraduate degree within a period of three years...I completed my Honours degree...I am incredibly blessed to share with you that I got accepted into a Masters programme.

Never allow your circumstances and the negativity of others to define who you are. We all have the capacity to become the definer and author of our dreams. I hope that you, like myself, continue to dream, pursue and strive toward the future. ”

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