

Dear Achiever,

Everything you have ever done in your life has led up to this exact moment. Every action, choice, and reaction has led you to right now. That, my friend, is something to be proud of. Regrets, mistakes, and failures are all part of the process of growing, transforming, becoming who you want to be, it's a beautiful but painful process.

The challenge with overcoming obstacles is that every obstacle you face in life seems like the biggest one you have ever faced. It is often hard to conceptualize and put in perspective the obstacles you face in the moment because the moment you are living in will consume your mind. You will often forget everything you have gone through to get you to this opportunity, this specific obstacle that presents itself to you. You'll find yourself overwhelmed with what is in front you, when you look over your shoulder, the mountain standing in your way will seem to overshadow everything you have done to get where you are. Remember, you are not alone, you can, and will overcome all you set your mind and heart to do.

I failed a class during my sophomore year of college. This was something that I knew was going to happen, even before my grade came in. Everything I had done up to that last assignment led me to my final grade. It wasn't that I wasn't smart, it wasn't that I wasn't good enough to be in school. It was simply a reflection of my attitude and mental state. I prioritized my other classes, my social life and my job above this class and let it overtake me, I failed.

Coming into college was a huge transition for me. Highschool had been relatively easy. I didn't have to spend much time studying to get B's and A's. I could ask teachers for help when I needed it, they pushed me to be my smartest self. I entered college with that same mentality, which was a rude awakening. I spent the first three semesters stuck in this mentality. My grades were scattered, a few A's and B's in classes that I really liked, but mostly C's and D's.

I let the pleasures of life drive me to prioritize these immediate pleasures, first, above my long-term goals. I let my financial stress and work replace the hours I should have been studying. I was failing myself, my potential.

The change in my mental attitude came when I realized that I could have it all, I could maintain my social life, athletics' and archive my full potential. This change came when I sought help, I started going to office hours, changed my advisor to someone who saw through my grades and saw me. I started planning my social life and not expecting

myself to study during the times I knew I usually devoted to my friends (and my love of watching the Pats). This was everything.

I felt pride in myself as well as my work for the first time in a long time. I hadn't realized that I had been floating, just getting by. It wasn't a reflection of my intelligence; it was a reflection on my view of my own self. Foster kids didn't graduate from college, we didn't make it this far, so why push? My subconscious mind took control of my aspirations and my drive. Asking for help was the first step in becoming and accepting my best self.

After years of this mentality, it took some hard work and courage and continuous work to succeed. My fifth semester I ended getting only one C, the following semester I earned all A's, the Dean's list. This was amazing to me, I finally felt as successful as I knew I could be. It's not an easy thing to do, to hold your own self responsible for your education and success.

Now don't get it twisted, you will never be done learning how to support yourself, it will be a continuing lifelong learning experience. You will have bad days, you will have good days. What's important to remember is that life shifts around you and your expectations of what "should happen" may rarely be met. That is not a discouragement to you, this is something to look forward to, to thrive on. Complete your studies by continuously doing the challenging thing, try not to put off until tomorrow what can be done today; challenge yourself to be the best possible you.

Lastly, accept failure with open arms and know that you will walk away stronger and with more courage than you thought you would ever have. You will grow from each failure. It will provide insights and opportunities that would not have been there otherwise. You will feel more pride than ever imaginable. Remember, you are exactly where you deserve to be, so ask for help and take failure as a sign of growth and opportunity. You will succeed.

Sincerely,  
Shelby Copans