

Robert's Essay

By far the greatest challenge since my hemispherectomy has been in the realm of academics. Right after my surgery several doctors and my local school system wanted to place me in remedial classes. Fortunately, my self confidence and my determination (stubbornness) to be with my peers led me to show the naysayers that I should be in regular classes, if not advanced ones. My determination to do well resulted in my willingness to endure both Spanish and Math tutoring all the way through Pre-calculus. I graduated from high school with my class and was accepted by both colleges to which I applied. I decided to attend the University of South Carolina (USC).

In spite of the unexpected return of seizures, I was successful at the University. In 2007 the Office of Student Disability Services selected me to serve on the Steering Committee for the USC Chapter of Delta Alpha Pi Honor Society. My fellow members of this inaugural committee selected me to serve as one of two co-chairs for the Committee, and we reached our goal of having our first initiation in April 2008. I was initiated into Phi Beta Kappa on April 12, 2008. I graduated Magna Cum Laude from USC with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sociology with a minor in Political Science on May 10, 2008.

I am pursuing a Masters of Social Work degree from the University of South Carolina to begin in the Fall of 2008 as a graduate student. My education in Sociology and Political Science provide me with the foundation to begin the Social Work Program. I understand American society, and in the United States Social Services are frequently impacted by and even implemented by the government. My Political Science education provides me with an understanding of the American government and its political system. My summer internship with Senator Lindsay Graham's Columbia office taught me first hand about dealing with a wide variety of people concerning a wide variety and often emotional issues. Also, my real life experiences provide me with a unique appreciation of Social Services.

My family and I have dealt with many hospital social workers, both good and bad. After these experiences I know first hand how beneficial a good social worker can be for people who desperately need some form of assistance and how frustrating a poor social worker can be to people who are in need of assistance. I want to be able to have the positive impact on people, similar to the influence others have had on me. I have had to work hard to recover from surgery, but it is time for me to repay those who inspired me. There is no way I can repay everyone who assisted me before and after my surgery. I believe the best way for me to show my gratitude and appreciation for their services is to pass it on and do for others what they did for me.

I have talked individually with families who are considering a hemispherectomy for their child. I am always honest about both the successes and struggles I have experienced or overcome as a result of the removal of half of my brain. Nevertheless, the surgery was the correct decision for me because I am convinced that without the surgery the seizures would have either left me virtually incapacitated or dead.

Overcoming the struggles has made me who I am today.

My goal after Graduate School is to be a hospital social worker. I enjoy being part of a team to help a patient heal both physically and emotionally. As a social worker I will be able to coordinate with a variety of medical professionals to assist patients both in the hospital and after they go home. More recently I have considered possibly being a school social worker to interact with students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and Section 504 plans since I experienced both plans after my surgery. I would like to be part of a team of educators and others to assist students in the school setting as well as making a difference in their lives outside of school. I realize my specific career aspirations may change as a result of my graduate school experiences, but I do know I want to make a positive difference in the lives of others.