

The first day I walked into the cosmetology school in my town, I was a sophomore in high school who resented school and everything about it. I was amazed. It looked like a huge hair salon. It was in the same building as construction, plumbing, computer science, and automotive classes. Everything was intriguing but overwhelming at the same time. I took it all in, thinking about what life had in store for me. I decided I wanted to go there for my junior and senior years, in a program where I could spend half the day at my regular high school and the other half in cosmetology school. To be completely honest, I was really sold by the fact that I could leave my high school halfway through the day and go learn about hair and makeup. Throughout my two years there I would come to learn that good things take time and if you really want something and work for it, it will happen. To those struggling with making a decision or change: listen to your true feelings.

I was really interested in the beauty industry. I always loved doing hair and makeup on myself and others. I remember putting on lip gloss and straightening my hair ever since I was a little girl. So, I worked hard to get into this program, and it paid off. I went into it with very little confidence, just hoping I could get by doing what I have known my whole life. A week or two in when I had to demonstrate a full roller set and comb out, reality set in that this might be harder than “real” school. Looking at the \$500 kit of tools I just purchased and the bag I was holding full of mannequin heads, I thought to myself, “How am I gonna do this?” I felt scared and completely unsure of what I was doing. Something in me knew how to deal with this and get through it.

Looking at everything going on in my life, I decided I needed to make some changes. At the time, I was doing varsity cross country and track and field. Practice was twice a day and I had races basically every weekend. It was very demanding, and I was not as interested in being

forced to run seven miles through trails as I used to be. I had to make the decision to quit and although it was difficult because I did love the team, I felt that I needed more time to focus on school (as college was coming up) and I wanted to be able to dedicate time to working on cosmetology when possible. I was met with a lot of opposition to my decisions. People from school and my team were saying, “why would you waste your time doing *hair*?” as if it was a cop-out of school. Nobody really took my decision seriously, but I just felt like it was the right thing to do. My parents were skeptical, but supported me nonetheless. Having just the smallest amount of support made the choice a little easier. I texted my coach that night, just wanting to get rid of the knots in my stomach. I spent a few hours typing out a short message: “Coach Dan, I am sorry, but as I am beginning a new commitment in my life, I do not think I can devote the same amount of time and effort to this sport. I’m unfortunately quitting the team.”

The next morning, I was sitting in class overthinking everything, going over and over in my head about whether or not I am doing the right thing. My cosmetology teacher asks our class a question seemingly out of nowhere. She says, “Do any of you want a job in a salon?” I was interested, wondering if I should get a job now that I did not have practice constantly. I gave it a shot and raised my hand. It ended up being a position at a hair salon I was familiar with and had been to a lot. I got the job, literally the same day, and it felt like my life was falling into place. I was so excited to start a new chapter in my life. This series of events convinced me that the cliché saying of “everything happens for a reason” is true.

The work in school got tougher and tougher. However, I began to learn how to manage it and began to quickly fall back in love with doing hair. Nothing could compare to the feeling of finally sitting down with the girls in my class (who became some of my best friends) at the end of the day on a Friday after working so hard all week. I continued to learn so much and it was

turning into a huge part of my life. I had to work extremely hard to balance my new job with both of my schools' work, but doing cosmetology honestly made my life so much better. I was learning something very interesting and that I could easily put to use in real life, unlike most of my high school classes which felt pointless and draining. This experience and working to get myself acclimated into it really shaped me. I was much more resilient and open to change. I now believed that if I feel a certain way about something, to go for it. And not only just go for it, but to really work hard and push myself in that direction.

Once I got used to the workload and the new environment, I loved cosmetology school so much. Being challenged to become better at something I love was enjoyable for me. Of course, having to redo a foil of highlights over and over until I got it perfect in the moment was not something I *loved* but looking back it made me much more persevering. Two years, a combined of over a thousand hours later, and a long process of testing later, I finally got my cosmetology license. It was so worth it and I would not trade the experiences and lessons for anything. Do whatever it is you have been debating for a while. If you really want something, go for it, and it will all work out how it is supposed to in the end. Even if it sounds cliché.