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Graduate Admission Essay

I did not always know that I wanted to be an Occupational Therapist. In fact, I didn't know such a career existed until my junior year of college. If there was one thing I was certain of, however, it was my desire to care for others. Initially, this is why I decided to pursue a degree in psychology. I wanted to work in the mental health field. Due to my life experiences and exposure to other areas of study, such as sociology and social work, my interest in mental health developed into something more. I began to research fields beyond psychology. Much to my surprise, I discovered Occupational Therapy and I was instantly hooked. After careful consideration, including my research, shadowing, and educational pursuits related to the field, I was able to determine that this field is the right fit for me.

Occupational Therapy is a profession well-suited to me as it aligns with my values and interests. My professional values include the acknowledgment of holistic health, the patient-centered model, and the mind-body connection. The notion of helping others engage daily in meaningful activities in order to facilitate independent living is encapsulated by the aforementioned values. I'll never forget when I learned that there are four types of social support: emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal. I wanted a career that was a confluence of all types of social support because the combination fosters the most improvement for the patient. Other careers that interested me did not offer this level of support. I am most interested in working in stroke rehabilitation, cancer rehabilitation, hand therapy, and brain injuries. However, my short-term goal is to attain a graduate degree in Occupational Therapy as this will make these goals possible.

(In my experience and shadowing, one principle of occupational therapy that I learned is that people are agents capable to resume occupations or attain the best quality of life.) In the fall of 2015, my mother was diagnosed with a mutated BRCA-1 gene, a precursor to breast cancer and ovarian cancer. As a result, she underwent a double mastectomy as a preventative measure. I was her primary caregiver during her recovery and was able to not only help her engage in her normal daily activities again, like walking, using the bathroom, and even taking her medication, but I also was able to witness her becoming stronger mentally and emotionally. This is an experience that I want to relive every day. My decision to study occupational therapy was reinforced by my shadowing experiences, working with patients from all facets of life who were being treated for a wide variety of healthcare issues, such as developmental delays, attention deficit disorder, lymphedema, low muscle tone, Parkinson's disease, cerebral palsy, stroke, and others.

It is not without challenge that I was able to accomplish what I have thus far. However, I believe true passion coupled with steadfast effort will supersede any obstacles standing in one's way. It is through my journey of sacrifice that I discovered what I valued most. (During my undergraduate career, I worked nearly thirty hours to support my education in a single-family home.) In the spring of 2013, I became very ill, diagnosed with mononucleosis, shingles, chronic fatigue, and required a tonsillectomy. I lost a significant amount of weight from my illness but, through proper nutrition and exercise, I finally was able to maintain a healthy weight. I did not let my illness hinder my progress. (Presently, I work full-time to support prerequisite coursework while shadowing.) It is my spirit of never giving up that will resonate in my professional career, especially by encouraging patients to (attain) daily living activities. This level of resiliency and commitment to patient care will allow me to become a successful Occupational Therapist.

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