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“ Your eyes are bigger than your stomach,” my mom always told me. I grew up having an extremely unhealthy relationship with food. I always overate. Whenever I was placed in a buffet setting, I became a binge eater. I would gorge as much as I physically could and then inevitably sprint to the bathroom to release the unfortunate remains of my meal. I thought this was normal. I thought regular “ pizza days” and eating a whole bag of chips while reading your favorite book were also something of the norm. I thought nothing about healthy or organic food, and I hated my own body. I would have been fat if it hadn’t been for dance classes. But what I then considered a love of dance exercise turned out to be more of a lust. I did not want to do it for the right reasons. I just wanted to be thin and pretty. I did not realize until late in my high school years how potentially harmful my lifestyle truly was.
In January of 2012, I discovered that one of my close friends had an eating disorder. It shattered my heart to hear her say she felt worthless and saw nothing good about herself when all I saw was her beautiful personality and strength. There was not much I could do to help her. Honestly, how could I help her make peace with her body when I had such a rocky relationship with my own? That was when I decided that I was going to practice a well-rounded, healthy lifestyle: eating nutritious foods, exercising regularly, and loving my body no matter what.
Along with battling my self-image, as a freshman in high school, I had a hard time academically and socially. Because of my name and my Middle Eastern descent, I was bullied a lot after 9/11, and my grades suffered. To help me through this time, I joined ERASE (end racism and sexism everywhere), FBLA (future business leaders of America), and the Student Council, and I re-applied myself to my studies. I was able to pull up my GPA somewhat as a result, but I was still fighting myself, as well as others. In addition, both my parents are disabled, and since I am their only child, it fell to me to help take care of them. This caused many additional absences from school. Still, I was, and continue to be, determined to succeed.
Toward the end of high school, I, like all my classmates, had to think seriously about college, where I wanted to go, and what I wanted to study. After only a little consideration, I knew that MSU would be ideal for me, academically, socially, and logistically. First, many of my relatives had attended this university, and they had highly positive experiences. Second, with my interest and strengths in literature, psychology, and history, I felt I would be a good fit for a major in Health Education. With everything I've been through, I want to be in a position where I can help those who have an unhealthy relationship with food and with themselves, and health education would allow me to do that. Third, I could take advantage of the multicultural academic setting, as well as feel more comfortable in my surroundings and make many new friends. And last, because the university is close to my home, I would be able to obtain a job on campus, as well as commute. Since I am still responsible for taking care of my parents, if there is any kind of emergency, I would be able to get home quickly.
This brings me back to my original statements about myself and my self-esteem. My newfound lifestyle has been a daily struggle, but it is also a passionate pursuit. “ Do it with passion or not at all” is the phrase I keep with me at all times. I have chosen the former despite the difficulty of living passionately in an often dispassionate or indifferent world. I have to be my own inspiration and motivation. I have to practice a healthy lifestyle in order to become the best “ me” I can possibly be, physically, academically, and socially, and attending MSU can help me achieve that. After all, if I am not passionate about my own self, how can I expect to be passionate about anything else?