

# Lessons learned admission essay examples

[Family](#), [Father](#)



It was my fault, I thought. The first day that I had enlisted in the United States Navy coincided with America's declaration of war on Iraq. The incredible timing of the whole chain of events was such that I imagined only Providence could have been responsible. Looking back on this moment, I could not fathom what I had done, or what factors in the universe had led to this coincidence; I was young enough that I had no real idea of what life was really about. The only thing that I could recognize was that these events would teach me very important lessons about myself, my duty, and my abilities. These were lessons that my father tried to teach me, though it took me much longer than I realized to learn them.

These lessons began when I was just a teenager. Two years prior to graduation, my family moved to Florida from New York City. I transferred to Homestead Senior High School - a small rural school on the outskirts of Miami, Florida. This was a big change for me; I was both depressed and excited about the move to a new city and a new school. Upon arriving at the new school, however, I quickly learned that the street gang epidemic that my parents so desperately wanted to avoid for their children was not unique to New York City alone. To that end, I began to revert back into a sort of survival mode. This focus on keeping my head down and not ruffling feathers soon manifested itself in my academic performance; my grades remained average and my ambition to continue to a higher learning institution quickly waned. It was only an indomitable desire to not disappoint my parents that kept me from dropping out.

Growing sick of school, I had signed up for the work study program and began my real world education of earning a paycheck in exchange for

manual labor, while still struggling with school. My father did not agree with my decision to work and remain in school, but it pained him that he could not offer me any more than the basic necessities, so he allowed it. He frowned upon anything that would have distracted me from my education; I still remember what my father once said to me: “ you’ll grow dependent on that weekly check and forego all of your aspirations out of necessity”. I immediately failed to grasp his wisdom, even as I was missing out on the school experience that I so desperately wanted because I was too blind to see my future slowly slipping away from me, all the while bagging groceries at a supermarket. Leaving my father’s aspirations for me farther and farther behind me with each passing year, I foolishly wasted precious years that I would now give anything to get back, but I also accept that I never will. I graduated in 1989, immediately moving to New York to make my way - with little discipline and no resources, my options began to quickly run out. Once I had nowhere else to turn, my friend's mother (who had always been supportive of me) steered me towards the military.

I enlisted in the US Navy shortly afterward, and so began the first Gulf War. I served aboard an aircraft carrier, the USS John F. Kennedy CV-67, during Desert Shield, which later turned to Desert Storm. As an Aviation Boatswain Mate, I was introduced to long hours out at sea. Learning self reliance was a major part of my training - calling someone else for help was not an option so far from home. My leadership skills became sharper as I needed to be able to make individuals from different walks of life work together as a team. I was taught discipline and dedication by being ordered to perform daily tasks upon which others peoples’ lives depended. However, the whole time

my father's voice persisted faintly in my mind, reminding me that I was meant for much more.

As an enlisted sailor, every time I received an order from an Officer, I could hear my father's voice telling me that I should have gone to college and continued my education. An inscription on the ship's quarter deck continued to haunt me with its ironic application to my life's journey:

" I can imagine no more rewarding a career. And any man, who may be asked in this century what he did to make his life worthwhile, can respond with a great deal of pride and satisfaction: I served in the United States Navy."

Despite this unease, I remain extremely proud of my time in the service, and I have many great memories of the places I have traveled, of meeting my first wife, and my loyal comrades to take from that experience. Upon returning from the war, we were greeted with open arms by an adoring public; the governor of Virginia flew out to greet us, and throngs of people as far as the eye could see came to wish us well. Their gratefulness for our service was so overwhelming, I wasn't expecting any more than that.

However, when I called home to let my parents know that I made it home safe, I was informed that my parents had come to see me and greet me at the pier. I will never forget the feeling I had when I finally caught a glimpse of my mother and father looking up at the ship, desperately trying to find me. All of my fears and anxieties were immediately put to rest as I wrapped both of them in an embrace that I wished had lasted an eternity. I will never forget my father's facial expression: so full of love, pride, joy and - most of all - relief that I was home safe and sound.

After I separated from active duty, I returned to New York and tried once more to take on the city that had previously bested me. Luckily, through hard work and dedication (lessons I learned in the military), I was able to hold down gainful employment and resume my education. Currently, I am about to graduate with an Associate's degree from The Borough of Manhattan Community College and have been promoted at work to a managerial position, gaining further responsibility and the respect of my colleagues. My plan was to continue on to a four year college within the CUNY system; however, Providence stepped in again and I came across an ad for Columbia University's School of General Studies. As I read those students' testimonials, finding that their paths were similar to mine, I realized that my dream was still attainable. My hope is to create a sustainable business that would fund my aspirations for social programs in the city, such as providing micro loans to the underprivileged and access to health care through a network of clinics. I would develop and model this project through the Economic theories that I would learn at a University whose philosophy is to solve systemic problems through creativity. With the help of this education, I would learn to lead the way in my field by creating a new path and exploring a new way of thinking.

The life lessons I have been handed throughout my life - whether they are through my father, the military, or myself - have been substantial. The lack of responsibility and foresight I experienced as a youth held me back somewhat, and denied me the traditional college experience. These are things I would have learned had I listened to my father attentively enough at the time; that being said, I do not regret my experiences for anything. My life

in the military taught me many important lessons, including the need for discipline, honor and self-reliance; it was an incredibly important character-building experience I am extremely glad for. My deep desire to become a part of Columbia University is echoed in the reason I joined the Navy: to become part of an institution with a lineage with high moral values and equally high standards. That is why I want to continue my story at Columbia University - that, and to make my father proud.