



My Journey to Med

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In less than 6 weeks, I will officially call myself a University Graduate as I complete my bachelor's degree in Psychology while maintaining a high standing on the honour roll! A milestone I once thought I would never achieve. Additionally, I plan to write the MCAT in the Spring and apply to Medical School in Fall 2021.

I would like to share my story with all of you; a story about a young man who suffers from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) and family difficulties.

I was born in Baghdad, Iraq. As a child, I went through things that no one should ever go through. My father walked out on my mother, brother, sister and I when I was 2 years young. My family and I fled Iraq when I was 5 and immigrated to Canada from Jordan when I was 7. I immediately became the father-figure as I learned the English language very fast and assimilated with the Canadian culture. As such, I took on many responsibilities at a very young age. I was juggling school, work, and home responsibilities all while living with an abusive parent. Simultaneously, I had to mask the pain of being bullied at school for being a minority who tried so hard to excel. Moreover, I was constantly told that I'm not good enough, not worthy of love, and that I won't amount to anything. ***Nonetheless, my goal to pursue Medicine never faded despite all the obstacles*** that I went through. Thus, I continued to move forward.

I graduated high school at the top of my class in multiple courses and achieved scholarships upon entry into University. I worked with many organizations, which have shaped my character, and allowed me to develop my time management, people skills, and more. I volunteered and advocated for people living with mental illnesses. I took on multiple leadership positions and managed groups of people. I built strong relationships and friendships. I then moved out, got my own place and my own car. I fell in love with a very charismatic, educated (Mechanical Engineer), supportive, and beautiful lady that I now call my wife. I became a father to a beautiful little boy that motivates me to be a better human being every day. Therefore, it is safe to say that I did not give up on myself (even though I came so close many times). Instead I took control of my life and turned it around with very little support at the beginning. ***The best part of all of this is that I'm 24 years young and only just getting started!***



Now you might be asking yourself “what clicked for him? What is or what was the motivating factor that kept him going all this time?” The answer is **my calling to Medicine**. It’s difficult to explain and it sounds made up, but it is the truth. This deep indescribable feeling in my bones that my purpose in life is to become a Medical Doctor. In my family tree, there are also lots of individuals who suffer from poor cardiac health, high blood pressure, and diabetes and so many relatives of mine have lost their lives to such conditions. Knowing that and experiencing it at a young age ignited my interest in learning more about cardiovascular degeneration, hypertension, and diabetes. Additionally, before I was even born my mother was severely electrocuted in her field of work and doctors often told her that it was a miracle that she survived. Years later, my mother and I visited a reconstructive plastic surgeon in Winnipeg seeking an operation that would give back some function to her hands. This experience and seeing first hand what my mom went through further strengthened my desire to become a doctor. Finally, working and volunteering with individuals who are living with mental and physical disabilities, while being diagnosed with a mental illness myself, has truly shown me that there is no other occupation that suits me better.

Lots of research correlates people from broken-homes, people living in poverty, single-parent households, people with mental and physical disabilities, people with substance abuse disorders, people with addictions, and even immigrants from developing countries with poor future outcomes. While evidence exists for such research, **I am here to tell you that you do not have to be a part of that population.** What has happened to you in the past may not have been in your control, however, you are NOW in control and YOU are responsible for your future. Similarly, your childhood upbringing does not have to define you. You have a choice, so choose to be resilient. **Be the mentor to others that you never had; lead by example.** That is the way I live my life. Believe me when I say that I had a million reasons to give up because of my circumstances. They were more likely to lead me to becoming homeless, rather than to graduate high school, let alone become a Medical Doctor or be in a position competitive enough for Medical School. I found a reason not to give up despite the cards that I was dealt. Therefore, **I encourage you to find your reason and purpose in life because if someone like me can, so can you.**

