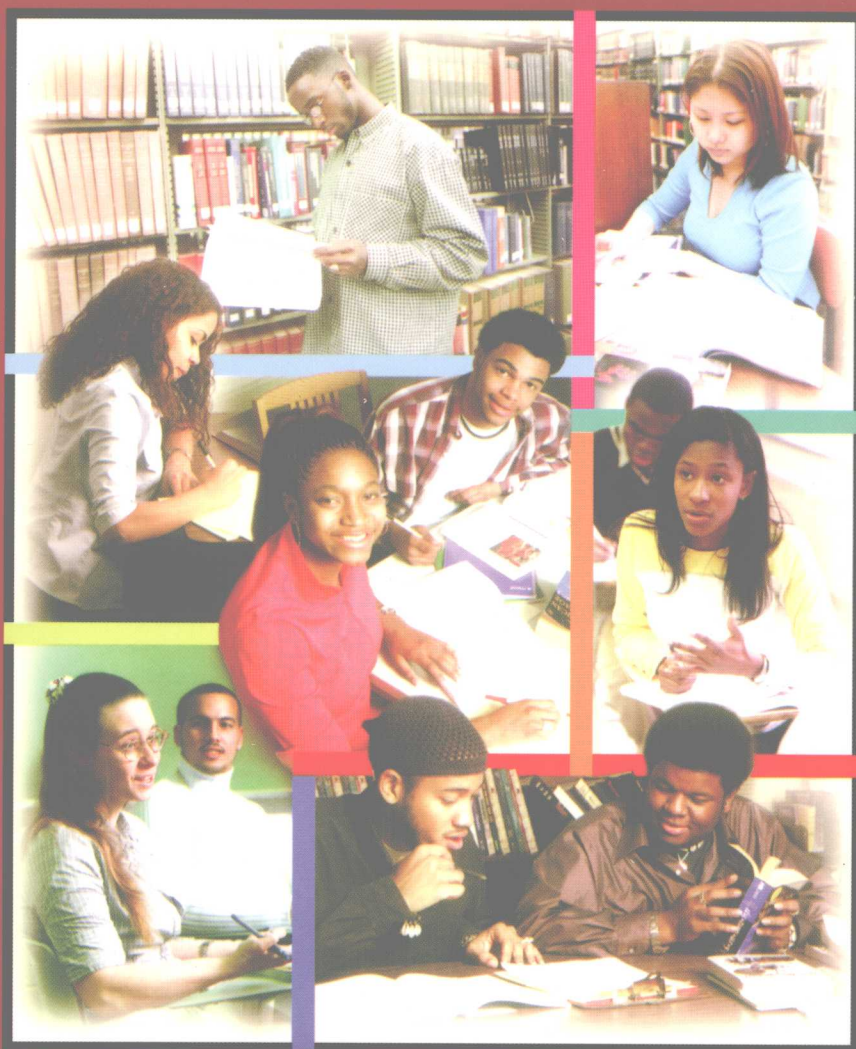


大学英语课外自学系列

# TEN SKILLS YOU REALLY NEED TO SUCCEED IN SCHOOL 学习成功十大法则

——大学英语读写训练

JOHN LANGAN



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江苏工业学院图书馆

藏书章



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JOHN LANGAN

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# 出版前言

本书由我社从 Townsend Press 引进改编后出版,供大学低年级学生和具有相当英语水平的学习者作为阅读和写作训练的辅导材料使用。

在提倡素质教育的时代,如何提高学生学习的积极性和自主性已经成为学校教育的重要课题。刚刚步入大学校园的新生,怎样才能适应自由开放的学习环境?如何在新的环境中崭露头角,取得学业成功呢?本书为他们提供了学业成功的十个必需的技巧。

如果没有正确的态度,任何技巧都不可能发挥作用。所以,本书一开篇就讨论了求学的意义,帮助读者了解自己,认识到学业成功的重要性。接着,本书以清晰易懂的方式讲述了学业成功必需的研修、阅读和写作技巧。在讲述各项技巧的同时提供一系列活动,帮助读者切实掌握。同时,本书还邀请了很多在读的大学生和大学毕业生现身说法。他们都认为学业成功是使生活更富有关键,他们运用书中介绍的技巧来追求学业的成功、生活的成功。他们的态度和技巧都将给读者以启示,使读者能具体地感受到这些技巧的实用性,帮助读者事半功倍地获得学业成功。

本书最后还指导读者如何保持身体健康以及如何与人相处,这些都是成功人士的经验之谈,虽然篇幅不多,却是字字珠玑,能帮助读者更好地生活和工作。

怎样才能人才济济的大学中脱颖而出,为开创成功生活打下坚实的基础呢?读完本书,相信你一定能找到答案,开创出属于自己的锦绣前程。

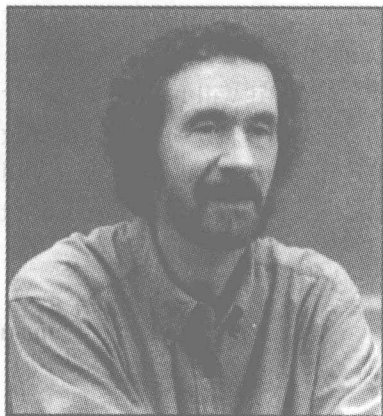
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# Introduction to the Book

The transition from high school to college can be overwhelming. Krystal Buhr, one of the students interviewed for this book, remembers her initial one-on-one meeting with her college English professor. "She tore my first paper up as I watched! I was stunned. No one had ever done anything like that to me before."

Krystal's experience reminds me of my first college history class with a professor known as Shotgun O'Grady. From the start of the class, he scribbled quickly on the blackboard and fired off a steady stream of ideas, dates, and details. Taken aback, I just listened for several minutes, and then he noticed me sitting there, my arms folded. "I expect you to know all this," he commented. So I started taking notes, lots of them, and halfway through the class my hand was cramped from writing. By the end of the class, I had over ten pages of notes, and I wondered how I would ever study and remember all the material.



*John Langan*



*Krystal Buhr is a student at  
Bucknell University.*

Krystal Buhr and I, like countless other students, had to do a lot of work developing the writing, reading, and study skills needed to succeed in college. Because we had not mastered or been taught these skills in high school, we had to learn how to learn — at the same time that we were trying to deal with the whole new world of college life. We could have used a book that would teach us the learning skills we needed to know and that would share with us the hard-earned



wisdom of other college students. *Ten Skills You Really Need To Succeed in School* will try to be that kind of book for you. Intended for first-year college students as well as for high school students thinking of going on to college, the book provides the know-how needed to achieve academic success.

### The Book's Special Features

*Ten Skills You Really Need To Succeed in School* is a practical book with a special human dimension. It presents as clearly as possible the nuts-and-bolts skills needed for success in school. Using a hands-on approach, it provides a number of activities at the end of each chapter so that you can learn through doing. At the same time, the book personalizes the skills by including photos and testimonials of a number of college students and graduates. Seeing their pictures and reading their comments will give you a better sense that the skills presented are ones that really work. All the students and graduates quoted speak from their own hard-earned experience; all have bridged the gap between high school and college and learned what they need to do well in college.

### A Final Thought

Several years ago, my wife and I were vacationing in New Mexico. As we drove into one small town, we suddenly came upon a huge billboard. I was so struck by what it said that I stopped our car and wrote the words down:

**If you never have a dream, you'll never make a dream come true.**

On the first page of the first chapter, I comment that if you don't have the right attitude, you might as well throw this book in the trash. I'm not kidding. Some students are just pretenders; they talk the talk, but they're not ready to walk the walk. *Ten Skills You Really Need To Succeed in School* will help you "walk the walk"; it will help you master the thinking, reading, study, and writing skills needed to be a success. But the starting point must be a dream inside you — a belief and resolve in your heart that you will achieve a college education. If you decide — *and only you can decide* — that you want a college degree, this book will help you reach that goal.



**John Langan**



# 1 / Looking Inside Yourself

## RESPECTING YOURSELF

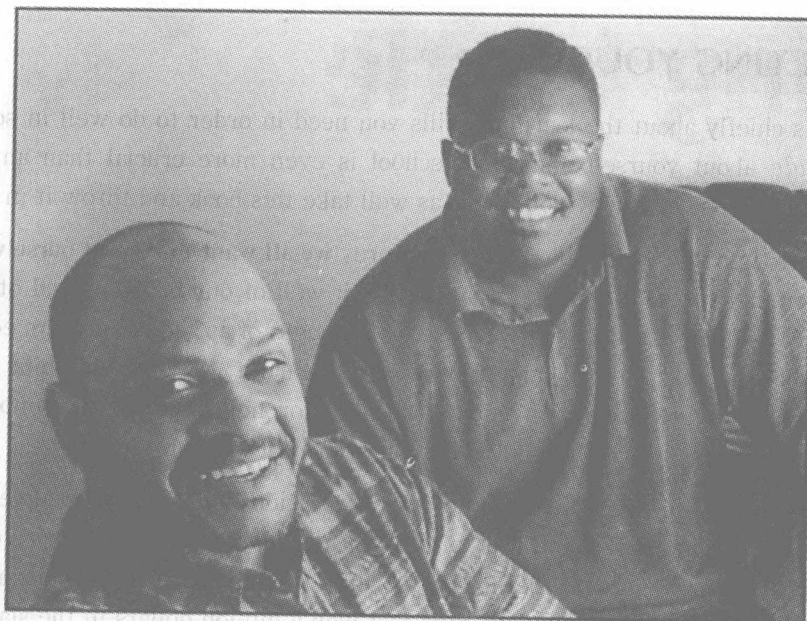
This book is chiefly about the learning skills you need in order to do well in school. But your *attitude* about yourself and about school is even more crucial than any learning skill. Without a good attitude, you might as well take this book and throw it in the trash.

Consider this basic truth about human nature: **we all want to respect ourselves.** We all want to live our lives in such a way that we think well of our behavior and others think well of us. We do not want to be disrespected or thought of as bad people. An equally basic truth is that the only way we can get respect is to earn it. At a certain point in growing up we realize that life doesn't give us something for nothing. What is important and meaningful is what we earn through trying hard and working hard.

Take a moment to think about the following question: Imagine two people. One person has drifted unhappily through life, putting in a minimal effort at a series of jobs and maybe even at times living off others. One morning the telephone rings and someone says to this person, "Congratulations. You have just won a million dollars in the state lottery." The other person works hard and eventually earns a million dollars; that person is well-regarded by others and has a strong sense of accomplishment and self-worth. Which person would you rather be — the one who *won* a million dollars or the one who *earned* a million dollars?

Hopefully you would choose to be the person who takes pride and satisfaction in having earned a good living. If you relate to that person, your attitude would be something like this: "I want to respect myself and have others respect me. To get this respect, I'm going to work hard to succeed. At this stage in my life, that means doing well in school because education is clearly a key to success." And if you've made mistakes in the past (and many of us have), your attitude should be: "I can change my behavior. I'm going to learn to work hard so I can get somewhere and be someone."

On the next page are two people who once had a bad attitude. Joe Davis (on the left) was a high-school dropout and a drug addict. Today he's married, working as a rehabilitation counselor, and also studying for a master's degree, with the hope of starting a new career as a teacher. Rod Sutton (on the right) was an angry, fatherless kid and a bully who was kicked out of more than one school. Today he and his wife have two children, he is teaching at an inner-city school, and he has recently earned a master's degree in education. You will learn more about their stories as well as some of their thoughts about learning in other parts of this book.



*Joe Davis is a graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania.*

*Rod Sutton has a master's degree from Eastern College.*

**Joe and Rod:** "For a long time we just didn't get it."

## DOING THE WORK

You need to believe in the saying, "No pain, no gain." The only way to get self-respect and success is to work for them. When I was teaching, I found that among the two hun-

dred or so students I met each year, there was no way of telling at first which students had this attitude and which did not. Some time must pass for people to reveal their attitude by what they do or do not do. What happens is that, as the semester unfolds and classes must be attended and work must be done, some people take on the work and persist even if they hit all kinds of snags and problems. Others don't take on the work or don't persist when things get rough. It becomes clear which students have decided, "I will do the work" and which have not.

The heart of the matter is not the *speed* at which a person learns; the heart of the matter is his or her determination — "I *will* learn." I have seen people who had this quality of determination or persistence do poorly in a course, come back and repeat it, and finally succeed.

For example, I've seen the young woman who wrote the following journal entry as her first assignment in a writing class eventually earn her GED and later a junior college degree:

Well it's 10:48 and my kid is in bed. I don't know yet what I'm going to write about but I hope I think of something before this ten minutes are up. boy I don't even like to write that much. I never send my letters or cards because I dislike writing, may be because I never took the time to sit down and really write, I've always wishes I could, put thing on paper that were in my mind. but my spelling isn't at all good, so when I had to take the time to look up a word, I said to heck with it, but, I can't do that with this any way I don't believ I can write for ten minutes straght, but Im trying to refus to stop until Ive made it. Ive always given my self credit for not being a quitter, so I guess I have to keep fighting at this and every thing else in the future, If I wish to reach my gols wich is to pass my GED and go in to nursing.

I know it will take me a little longer then some one who hasen't dropped out of school but no matter how long it takes I'm shure I will be well worth It and I'll be glad that I keep fighting. And Im shur my son will be very proud of his mother some day.

Through knowing people as determined as this young woman, I've come to feel that the single most important factor for school survival and success is *an inner commitment to doing the work*. When the crunch comes — and the crunch is the plain hard work that school requires — the person with the commitment meets it head-on; the person without the commitment avoids it in a hundred different ways.

## DISCOVERING THE NEED TO DO THE WORK

I have seen too many students over the years who have acted more like zombies in class

than like live people. Such students are their own worst enemies. It's clear they regard themselves as unlikely to succeed in school. They walk into the classroom carrying defeat on their shoulders the way other students carry textbooks under their arms.

I'd look at them slouching in their seats and staring into space and think, "What terrible things have gone on in their lives that they've quit already? They have so little faith in their ability to learn that they're not even trying." These students may suddenly disappear one day, and often no one pays much notice because they have already disappeared in spirit long before.

When I have seen such students with resignation in their eyes, I have wanted to shake them by the shoulders and say, "You are not dead. Be proud and pleased that you have brought yourself this far. Yes, life has probably been very hard, but you can still be someone. Breathe. Hope. Act." Such people should refuse to use self-doubt as an excuse for not trying. They should roll up their sleeves and get to work. They should start taking notes in class and trying to learn. I want to say to them, "Get off the bench. Come onto the playing field. Give it a shot. You'll never learn to succeed if you don't try."

Thankfully, not every such student succumbs to the poison of self-doubt. What I have seen happen is that a spark will ignite. Some students discover possibilities within themselves or realize the meaning that school can have in their lives. As a result, they make the inner commitment to do the work that is essential to academic success.

Here is one student's account of such a discovery in her first semester in college:

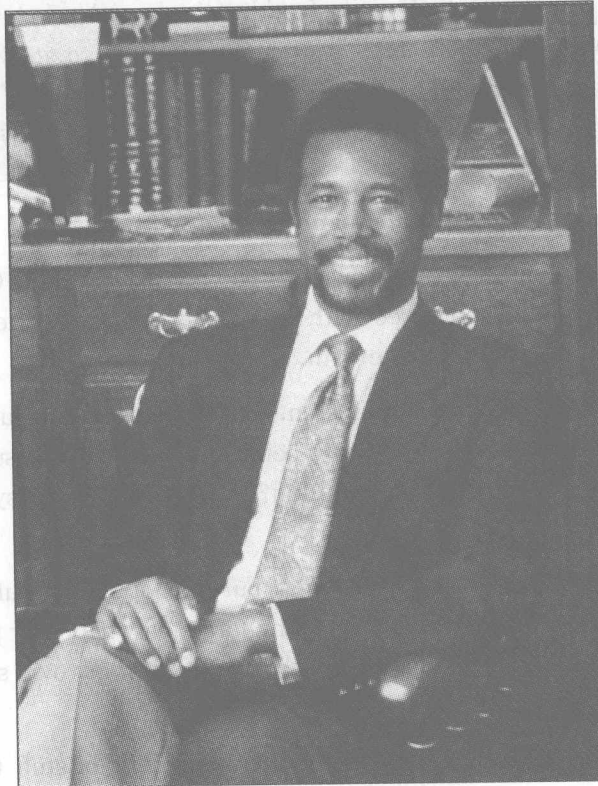
My present feeling about college is that it will improve my life. My first attitude was that I didn't need it. I had been bored by high school where it seemed we spent grades 9 to 12 just reviewing everything we had learned up through grade 8.

When I entered college in January I thought it was fun but that's all. I met a lot of people and walked around with college textbooks in my hand playing the game of being a college student. Some weeks I went to class and other weeks I didn't go at all and went off on trips instead. I didn't do much studying. I really wasn't into it but was just going along with the ball game. Sometimes kids would be going to an early class and I would be walking back into the dorm from an all-night party.

Then two things happened. My sociology class was taught by a really cool person who asked us questions constantly, and they began getting to me. I started asking *myself* questions and looking at myself and thinking, "What's going on with me? What do I want and what am I doing?" Also, I discovered that I could write. I wrote a paragraph about my messy brother that was read in class, and everyone roared.

Now I'm really putting time into my writing and my other courses as well.

Just the other day my writing teacher asked me, "What is the point at which you changed? Was there a moment of truth when the switch turned to 'on' in your head?" I don't know the exact moment, but it was just there, and now it seems so real I can almost touch it. I know this is my life and I want to be somebody and college is going to help me do it. I'm here to improve myself, and I'm going to give it my best shot.



*Among the present and past students interviewed for this book is Dr. Ben Carson, professor and director of pediatric neurosurgery at the Johns Hopkins Children's Center, the author of several best-selling books, and president of a nonprofit organization, the Carson Scholars Fund.*

**Dr. Carson talks about his moment of truth in his first semester at Yale:**

*"Going off to Yale from an inner-city high school in Detroit was an incredible culture shock. I barely had to study in high school. I found myself trying to do that at Yale, and it wasn't working, and I almost had to leave after the first semester. It was that experience, combined with my desire to succeed, that basically made me grab myself by the throat. I said, 'You're going into the stacks in the library where nobody can bother you, and you're going to study every free moment you have.' And that's what turned it around for me, just constantly banging it in, over and over again. Study became crucial for me, like breathing."*

**► Activity: Evaluating Your Attitude toward School**

Take a moment to think about your own attitude toward learning. Check off each item that applies to you. (If you agree with some sentences in an item but not others, cross out the ones you do not agree with.)

\_\_\_ School has never really turned me on. I feel I can start to study if I need to, but I don't want to. What's wrong with being a bit lazy if life is supposed to be about enjoying yourself and having some fun? I want to take it easy and have as much of a good time as I can for now.

\_\_\_ I suppose I am passive about studying, but it's not all my fault. I'm tired of just being told what to do. I'm tired of being force-fed what other people think I need to learn. I can't wait to get out of school and be on my own so I can start living my life.

\_\_\_ I'm not ready to take responsibility for learning a lot of stuff that is not going to be of any value to me as far as I can see. Why should I study stuff that has no interest for me?

\_\_\_ If I start studying, I'll miss out on the good times that school has to offer. I won't have time to go to games or parties. And I don't want to be alone. If I start studying, some of my friends are going to think twice about hanging out with me.

\_\_\_ I want to do more in school, but I'm afraid of really giving it a good effort. What if I try my best and I still get lousy grades? My pals will see this, and they'll just laugh at me. I don't want to look foolish, so I'm probably just going to drift



along and not call any attention to myself.

Maybe there is no "take charge of my life" switch inside me. Or if there is, maybe there is no way of turning it on. My feeling is that I just want to cruise along and hope I get lucky. Maybe I will win a lot of money in a lottery. I wish I could work hard, but I want to be honest about that. I just don't think I'm going to do it. I'm just going to keep hanging out with my friends and not doing anything.

I guess I've just been out of it for a long time. There are probably lots of reasons why. I got little encouragement along the way. I pretty much just let things happen to me. I feel like a piece of driftwood tossed about on a stormy sea. I do want to do something and to become someone. I've felt like this for a while, and at times I really want to get serious. But so far I just haven't done so.

I'm not an active student, and I don't do my best all the time. But I'm not a zombie either. I do some studying, just not as much as other people would like me to. I should probably do more, and I'm going to work on that and try to do a better job of taking charge of my studies.

I'm ready to move. I want to be active. I believe that a spark has finally begun to burn inside me. I was dead to learning, and now I'm coming alive. I want to get somewhere, and I'm ready to be a serious student. It's true that some of the stuff I have to study is boring, and some teachers do not care. But I feel now that these are just hurdles that will not stop me. I'm going to do my best to get where I want to go.

I'm on the move, and I have taken charge of my life. There is something inside me that is strong and determined to succeed. I feel in my heart of hearts that nothing is going to stop me. It's my life, and I'm going to work hard, respect myself, and gain success and happiness.

If you have a chance, share your answers with other students. Spend some time talking with each other about what your attitude is and, if necessary, how you can improve it.

## RUNNING FROM THE WORK

As a school semester unfolds and the crunch of work begins, students are put up against the wall. Like it or not, they must define their role in school. There are only two roads



to take. One road is to do the work; to leave the game table, click off the stereo or television, turn down the invitation to go out, get off the phone, stop anything and everything else, and go off by oneself to do the essentially lonely work that studying is. The other road is to escape the work.

### **Escape Habits**

Here are some of the habits that people practice to avoid doing the hard work that school requires. If you see yourself in any of these situations, you need to do some serious thinking about your behavior. Self-knowledge is power! Once you are aware of a problem, you can begin to deal with it.

#### **"I Can't Do It."**

Some people will let themselves be discouraged by bad grades. They'll think, "There's no use trying. I'm just not any good at this." But the only way people will really know that they cannot do something is by first trying — giving it their best shot. They must not let a defeatist attitude keep them from making a real effort.

Do not hesitate to take advantage of a tutoring program or a writing, reading, or math lab. You can often go to your teacher as well. If you think you "can't do it," the reason may be that you have given up far too soon.

#### **"I'm Too Busy."**

Some people *make* themselves too busy, perhaps working more hours at a part-time job than they need to. Others get overly involved in social activities. Others allow personal or family problems to become so distracting that they cannot concentrate on their work. There are situations in which people are so busy or so troubled that they cannot do their work. But there are also situations in which people exaggerate conflicts or stress. They create an excuse for not doing what they know they should do.

#### **"I'm Too Tired."**

People with this excuse usually become tired as soon as it's time to write a paper or study a book or go to class. Their weariness clears up when the work period ends. The "sleepiness syndrome" also expresses itself as an imagined need for naps during the day and then ten hours or more of sleep at night. Students with this attitude are, often literally, closing their eyes to the hard work that school demands.

#### **"I'll Do It Later."**

Everyone tends at times to procrastinate — to put things off. Some students, however, constantly postpone doing assignments and setting aside regular study hours. Time and

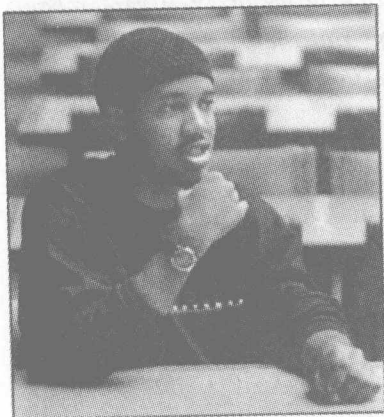
time again they put off what needs to be done so they can watch TV, talk to a friend, go to the movies, play cards, or do any one of a hundred other things. These students typically wind up cramming for tests and writing last-minute papers, yet they often seem surprised and angry at their low grades.

### **“I’m Bored with the Subject.”**

Students sometimes explain that they are doing poorly in a course because the instructor or the subject matter is boring. These students want education to be entertainment — an unrealistic expectation. On the whole, courses and instructors balance out: Some are boring, some are exciting, many are in between. If a course is not interesting, students should be all the more motivated to do the work so that they can leave the course behind once and for all.

### **“I’m Here, and That’s What Counts.”**

Some students spend their first weeks in college lost in a dangerous fantasy. They feel, “All will be well, for here I am in college. I have a student ID in my pocket, a sweatshirt with the college name on it, and textbooks under my arm. All this proves I am a college student. I have made it.” Such students have succumbed to a fantasy we all at times succumb to: the belief that we will get something for nothing. But everyone knows from experience that this hope is a false one. Life seldom gives us something for nothing — and school won’t either.



*Kenyon Whittington is a student at Hampton College.*

### **Kenyon on “I Can’t Do It”:**

*“I had to deal with my own skepticism and self-doubt. Low esteem was a problem for me, and I saw it was a problem for other students. I eventually developed the attitude, ‘Just do it. if you don’t finish or you don’t get a good grade, at least you tried.’”*