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Dear Student :

It's funny to think that I am old enough now to be asked to look back on my life and give advice to someone your age. I'm writing to you because, looking back, I wish that somebody would have told me that I really could do whatever I wanted to. Unfortunately, I had to discover that for myself.

Growing up, I was an average kid. I liked to play soccer and was a cheerleader in highschool. I never really thought about college because I knew my parents had not saved for it, and I felt guilty asking them about it. I continued to keep up with my school work and plugged away until graduation. Luckily, I really liked to write and someone told me I could get a scholarship to a community college if I worked on their newspaper—so I did. Those two years flew by and I loved college so much I wanted more! I was accepted at Michigan State University where I majored in communications with a specialization in public relations. Because of my meager financial situation, I had to work full-time and balance my course load very careful. Although I wasn't able to go on fancy trips like many of the other students, I enjoyed learning and made many friends.

After graduating from Michigan State, I still wanted to learn more. I remembered my third grade teacher once told me I would make a good lawyer one day (I was only 10 at the time), and I laughed to myself. How could I ever afford to go to law school??!!!!?? I applied to law school just to see if I could get in.....I did! Fortunately, there is always a way to make finances work if you're willing to work hard and focus.

After law school, I found that I really loved to write, so I started doing appeals. I am passionate about children and specialize in children's law. In just 3 years of practicing law, I have filed briefs in the Michigan Supreme Court, Michigan Court of Appeals, and the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals. I serve as chair-elect on the Children's Law Section of the State Bar of Michigan and work actively to help make Legislative changes that will help Michigan children—especially those who are victims of abuse or neglect.

Only time will tell what the future holds for my career, but I never imagined that I would make it this far. We lived in the rattiest house on the street, wore hand-me-down clothes, often didn't have money to buy lunch, and rarely had friends over out of embarrassment. Unfortunately, my parents never told me I could reach my goals, let alone become a successful attorney after putting myself through school. Who knows where I would be if they had told me I could do it.

So, I am here to tell you what your parents might not be telling you: you can. Whatever it is that you want to do—you can. Whatever it is that you think will hold you back—don't let it. There isn't enough financial strain to stop you from succeeding. There isn't enough peer pressure to stop you from succeeding. There isn't enough anything to stop you from succeeding. I came from very little and found a way to have a wonderful career as well as the love and support of my family. Find something you love to do and succeed—because you can!

Very truly yours,

Jodi L.

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