

## Essay

Please write and title a 500-700-word essay on the following theme:

What advice would you give an incoming 9<sup>th</sup> grader at your high school to help them maximize their high school experience?

### Be Positively You

At the age of fourteen, I was diagnosed with a rare autoimmune disorder called Juvenile Dermatomyositis. My immune system was attacking my muscles, causing weakness and intense pain. In middle school, I was in numerous activities. I enjoyed being an active student. Struggling to function was a major setback in my life, as I had to change my activities and busy lifestyle in order to address my illness, treatment, and limitations. I struggled to cope with the fact that my busy lifestyle would have to take a break for a while. I realized that I did not want to dwell over something that I could not change. I made a choice to remain optimistic through my struggles and to find the light in my situation. I became involved with organizations and people that would help me continue my journey of positivity. My family, friends, and medical staff all supported me and remained optimistic while I underwent many treatments and procedures. Because of my positive outlook, I was able to remain upbeat even through one of the worst times of my life. As an incoming freshman, I share my story to address the powers that positivity can have throughout high school and your life.

The first step of developing positivity is building a healthy support system. So many students today, especially those in high school, are glued to their phones. Many people are on social media 24/7 posting, tagging, and scrolling. Many teens forget how valuable face-to-face interactions can be. Sometimes having a simple conversation with someone can change your outlook, as well as theirs. You can choose your friends, family, teachers, and anyone else to be a part of your support system. High school is fun and exciting, but it also poses challenges, so it's imperative to have people rely on from your positive support system.

Next, find out how you can get involved as an incoming high school student. I have formed some of my greatest friendships and bonds with others through extracurricular activities at school. Throughout my four years at Park Hill, I have been a member of Student Council, National Honor Society, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Future Career and Community Leaders of America, Choir, Drama, Sophomore Executive Council, Junior Executive Council, and Senior Executive Council where I was elected to be the Senior Class President. I have met many new people that I would have never met if I would not have joined or been willing to get involved. I also have many cherished and positive experiences from these events. Being involved in high school gives you an opportunity to find new activities that make you happy. Get involved!

As a middle school student looking into the future, high school can seem daunting and intimidating. While the upper classmen may seem scary, it is important to remember that they once felt scared and intimidated themselves. Every high school student was once a wide-eyed freshman walking

in the doors on the first day, not knowing what to expect. When going into high school, be confident in who you are. Do not be afraid to be yourself. My favorite quote from Mark Twain says, "Dance like no one's watching, sing like no one's listening, love like you've never been hurt, and live like it's heaven on earth". I believe this quote embodies the idea that it does not matter what others think. You need to be happy with who you are and enjoy your own journey. You are unique and amazing the way you are. Be confident; be you!

Although life will present you with challenges, remain positive and keep a positive attitude in all that you do, and you will find that you open doors and create new opportunities. True positivity may seem hard to achieve amidst the drama of high school, but you can choose to remain optimistic in times of struggle. When you believe in yourself, rely on your support system, and join new activities, you will be well on your way to having the best high school experience and being the most positive you throughout your life.