

Aimee Tripp
Personal Essay

Like most teenagers I couldn't wait until I turned 16. I dreamed of passing my driver's test on my first try and receiving a brand new car just because my parents loved me. I dropped hints, some subtle and some obvious, for several years prior to my 16th birthday. Each time I was given the same response. "You can do whatever you want to but you will have to pay for it." I always thought they were joking. Since my birthday is in August and I was the youngest of my friends to turn 16, I had seen all of them get a car for their birthday that was purchased by their parents. Sure, they had different stipulations, like paying for all of their gas, or paying their insurance. However, none of them had to actually pay for the vehicle.

When I finally realized that my parents really weren't going to buy me a car I became angry. "How can you do this to me?" I cried. I informed them that they were unfair, didn't love me, and didn't want me to have my own car. They always calmly informed me that if I wanted something bad enough it was up to me to figure out how to get it. After realizing they weren't going to budge on their stance, I knew I had to make a plan to get myself a car. I would have to find employment beyond my occasional babysitting jobs.

When I was 14 I got a job at a local country club. While a job at a golf course may sound fun, let me remind you that I was only 14. That severely limited the jobs I could do. I couldn't operate the big mowers, drive the golf carts, or even run simple equipment. At age 14 I could do only the most menial, boring, unglamorous jobs. I cleaned the restrooms, pulled weeds, edged cart-paths, and painted out-of-bounds stakes. If I was really lucky I got to pick up trash and remove walnuts that had dropped from the trees. Like I said, not real exciting.

While working for the two summers before I turned 16 I realized something. I was relying entirely on myself to earn something I wanted. Not only was I making money, I was also learning about real life. I had to learn how to prioritize my life. Sometimes when I would rather be out with friends I would have to be at work. It wasn't that I didn't have a social life, I just had to plan ahead better. I learned how to be punctual, do quality work, work cooperatively with a group of people that were different than me, and gain some work ethics. Granted, you can learn some of this in school, but usually it is with people you already are familiar with and things that you already have some knowledge about.

Not only did I have to learn to work with a crew and boss, I also had to develop a broader range of people skills for the members that golfed at the country club. They were paying good money to be there so I had to learn to make it the best that I could for them. I learned responsibility. The more I worked, the more I realized that this wasn't just a job so I could get a car. It was giving me life lessons about how to be an independent person in society. I had to learn to

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problem solve. I had to take responsibility for my mistakes. No longer could I blame my parents, teachers, or friends. I was the person in charge of my life.

By the time I had my 16th birthday I had earned enough money to purchase my own car. It wasn't the brand-new, sporty convertible I had wished for. Instead it was a used, 2005 Chevrolet Cavalier. The thing I liked about it though was that it was all mine. It represented my hard work and dedication to fulfilling a goal. I had proved to myself that I could set a goal and attain it through hard work. My parents were proud of me and my friends were impressed. They couldn't believe it was possible that I could actually have made enough money. I even had enough left over to pay for my insurance and tags so that it didn't have to sit in my driveway.

As my college days got closer I asked my parents if they would help me pay for it. I got a similar answer as before. "You can do whatever you want to but you will have to pay for most of it." This time I knew they weren't joking. I made a plan. Since I have always been a good student I knew that my grades would be a positive. I have been an active member in my school and community as well. I studied hard and received a 30 on my ACT. I plan on applying for scholarships to help with expenses. Hopefully I will have enough money to fulfill my dream of designing prosthetics for people in need.

No matter what, I have learned that growing up isn't about what others can do for you, it is about what you can do for yourself. I think everyone can be successful in their life if they want to be. I thank my parents every day for guiding me on my journey towards independence. No matter what challenges life brings me, I feel that I have the skills to help myself succeed.

I have continued to work at the golf course to earn money for college. Now that I am old enough to run equipment my days aren't all spent doing manual labor. Sometimes I still pull weeds, pick up trash, and dig ditches. I also get to drive \$40,000 mowers. How many other 17-year-olds can say they have done that! Talk about an expensive set of wheels...