



The Lottery

One of the main aims in my life is helping and guiding children to achieve their goals. In this regard, an email from NYC Summer Youth Employment Program informing me of the position to work with 8- 12-year-olds in a basketball camp was thrilling. Getting the dream job was more than just winning money to me. It reminded of my own experiences when I was their age. I remembered launching a group with boys in my team and collecting sports equipment for kids who could not afford but wanted to play sports such as basketball, baseball, and soccer in my seventh and eighth grade. I eagerly and anxiously waited for the first day in my new position and put a hold on all other efforts of securing another job.

Filled with excitement, I showed up for work the first day and approached the area where I was supposed to meet with my manager. Along with other lottery winners, I waited for almost two hours before a staff member informed us that the organization was forced to cancel the program. Feeling distraught, disappointed, and almost embarrassed for being so hopeful, I took the bus back home. This did not only leave me feeling depressed and hopeless, but also made me think that my choices in life were poor. My hopes of ever achieving my dreams started dwindling. At that point, it was too late for me to apply for another sports camp job, and the only positions available were at supermarkets or drugstores as a stock boy. That was not as fun as basketball, and I had neither the experience nor the interest to work at a store. I was stuck.

A week later, NYC SYEP contacted me for an available position at CVS Pharmacy. I had a choice to stay at home over the summer or take up a job to which I had no interest. Despite saying “yes” to this opportunity, I lacked motivation. Contrary to my expectations, my experience at CVS was fascinating. I interacted with numerous customers on a daily basis, developing my communication and social skills. I was also chosen to lead a group of four volunteers to conduct a marketing campaign, which enhanced my leadership and teamwork qualities. I developed multi-tasking abilities as I managed the cash register, resolved customer queries, managed inventory in the Baby, Kids & Toys department and assisted the store manager in the opening and closing of the pharmacy.

Although I enjoyed getting paid for my efforts, something was still missing. I realized that my excitement for the basketball job was as a result of my passion for helping and guiding people. Following this desire, in 2017, I started volunteering at the Meadowbrook Care Center, a facility for geriatric patients. I interacted with patients by playing games, chatting, and assisting with therapeutic rehabilitation, which allowed me to achieve my initial goal that I missed after NYC Summer Youth Employment Program was canceled.

Reflecting back on my experiences, I realize that encountering obstacles is a part of life. I also learned that what one chooses to do with an opportunity determines success or failure. Having missed a chance to achieve my dream, I was disappointed and heartbroken. Settling for a lesser desired opportunity, I thought I would never get to the set goal. A job in a pharmacy was not my first option, but it turned out to be a blessing as I managed to develop and enhance various skills that may help me significantly in my future studies and career. My experience not only put me down to earth but also reminded me that hard work and helping others are always rewarding experiences. I guess I did win the lottery after all!