

Why Help?

When I first applied to Western Washington University (WWU), I had no idea what I was going to study. I knew that my family wanted me to go to college, and all my friends were going, so I felt that WWU would be the next step for me. After taking a few art classes at Everett Community College, I decided that is what I wanted to pursue. However, when I started classes at Western I realized that the art program was not suitable for me, but because I came in with sophomore credits, I knew I needed to figure it out fast. I spent a lot of time bouncing between majors: photojournalism, sociology, early childhood education, English... nothing felt right. Finally, one of my friends told me about the program she was in: Human Services.

As a child, I believed that all I wanted to be was a stay at home mother. I live to help people and make their lives easier; I have been known to go out of my way and inconvenience myself in order to make life a little easier for someone else. I really knew I wanted to be part of the Human Services program after talking to my friend Sabrina during my first year at Western. I met her at The INN (a student-lead ministry), and she was a huge support for me, and my biggest inspiration for wanting to turn my love for people into a career. It was winter quarter of my freshman year when I knew I could do so much in the field of human services. I had decided to go on a mission trip to Arizona over spring break to work on the Navajo reservation, I was starting my first quarter in Compass 2 Campus, I had started my application for human services, and I was thinking seriously about becoming a student leader at The INN. Although I had a lot going on, being in all those positions of helping made me truly happy, and I knew I was making a difference in someone's life. While I had all this going on, I also had a developing relationship with a few mentors myself. Sabrina, who I mentioned earlier, was my closest mentor. She's always there to help me when I get overwhelmed and I know that no matter what happens she's

there for me. Along with Sabrina, I had a mentor from Student Outreach Services, Jon, and my RA, Masyih. Jon was really great because we had a lot in common, so I knew that although I felt like I was drowning, I would make it. Masyih was a positive influence in my life as a freshman. He encouraged me to do the best I could, and he knew I was capable of more than I knew. With all these wonderful people surrounding me, my first year of college was made so much easier, and I knew I wanted to make a difference for someone just like they did for me.

The number one thing that I find value in in life is simplicity. It's so easy for people to get bogged down with every day events in our lives, and in times like that it's easy for us to feel like we have no one to depend on and nowhere to go. Throughout my own life, I have experienced this many times. My experiences handling stress can be helpful in the Human Services profession; I'm really good at calming people down and helping them sort through everything bogging them down, and teaching them to take it one step at a time. Patience and respectfulness also helps me with this; I have the ability to keep calm and polite when those around me are stretched beyond their limits and getting anxious. This is extremely important when working with people, because they are able to pick up on the emotions of those around them. If you're getting annoyed with someone who is upset, they will only become them more upset, but if you're able to stay calm it's easier for them to calm down. One thing that I'm not good at, though, is talking to large groups of people. There is a lot of speaking involved in this career path, and I could encounter an event where I would need to speak to a large group quite often. A good way for me to overcome that weakness is to just practice my speaking and be prepared. I know that after a while, I will be able to overcome my weakness.

Human Services is an extremely large field with a lot of options that I feel I would be well suited for. I'm not sure what exactly I'd like to pursue, but at the moment I'm interested in

being a counselor for at-risk youth, either in schools or for the children going through foster care. When I went through the Compass 2 Campus program during my freshman year, we had to read an article titled *The Effects of a Mentoring Program on At-Risk Youth* written by Lisa Keating, Michelle Tomishima, Sharon Foster, and Michael Alessandri. In the article, the authors said “youth who reported lower levels of social support were more withdrawn, hopeless about their future, inattentive, and harmful to others than were youth who reported higher levels of social support. Mentoring may provide some of this social support and, hence, improve youth functioning.” (Keating, Tomishima, Foster & Alessandri, 2002). This, along with what we have read in *Hope’s Boy* about the foster care system in LA has encouraged me to work with children and help to improve their future.

The Human Services program is going to be a lot of work, and I do not know exactly what I am going to do with the degree, but I do know that no matter what I do, I will be able to change someone’s life. Many people have changed my life thus far, and I know many people will continue to come along and change it. There is inspiration for good all around me, and I want to be able to spread that to others. Although I have a weakness that could hold me back, I have got plenty of strengths that will help me help others to the best of my abilities, and I have the drive to push past my weakness. One day I hope to be able to change the foster care system, to make it an easier and less stressful transition for the children going through it.