

## My New Name is “Practice”

When I lived at home, my life was very easy because I was a dependent person. I would say that most of the things that I had to do related with my life had been done by my husband and my family. That was because I grew up in a broken family, so I was my mother’s everything. She would do anything that I would ask for. After she passed away, I had to ask my husband to help me with my daily duties such as going shopping and taking care of children. One day, I got accepted for scholarship to study in the United States. It was not easy because I had many problems. The first one was that my husband wouldn’t be able to take a leave of absence from work. Therefore, I decided to come with my brother. The second difficulty was that my brother was just 18 years old, meaning that I had to take care of him. Moreover, we have a different mother, so we were not familiar with each other and needed to get to know each other.

In terms of being in the United States, it was my first time to travel to a country that uses English as a primary language. Also, my English was basic at that time. I was not able to drive, and I needed to take care of two children. In the first month, I was too excited to predict the difficulties that I might go through. I was busy with discovering places, friends, cultures, teachers, nature, religions and myself. As the time went by, I started realizing that I have numerous responsibilities. My brother was not able to provide help for my kids or teach me how to drive. All the pictures of perfect life that I had imagined turned out to be false, because I only thought about the positive and ignored the negative sides. I started learning how to drive; I failed three times, but

I passed finally and now I have my driving license. As time passed, I started learning how to deal with these problems, and how to be independent.

I tried to take every single opportunity to teach my kids knowledge and improve their living skills. Now they can learn by themselves and try to make good use of their free time. Sometimes I need to take my kids to the ELI with me when they have no class. It is stressful, but it is the only way that I can deal with this situation. However; their English keeps improving because they can practice and hear English being spoken. About my English, I take every single opportunity to learn; I like to ask people working in the stores how I can pronounce words. Sometimes I ask them for permission to record their voices. I used to come early to class and sometimes I was the last student who left. I always had many questions for my teachers. My friends always told me that they could hear my voice when they were next to my class. Also, one of my best friends called me “Practice” instead of Aishah because whenever we went somewhere if I found any person who would talk to me I would stop and talk to them even if we would be late.

Fortunately, I got the IELTS score that I wanted after completing the third session. The first person I told was my teacher because I think he is the only one who knows how much I am determined to learn English. He replied, “Your hard work paid off!” I remember days when my friends hung out and they called me to join them; I would tell myself focus on the reason why you are here and watch a movie, and this was a fun way to get used to English and learn something new. As result of my hard work, I got accepted to Embry Riddle Aeronautical, and I have started learning about cybersecurity.

These concerns were not the only things that I have to care about. I have a bakery business called Dan Cake House I started after I completed my bachelor’s degree. However, my dream to come to the U.S to improve my English and to get my master’s degree in cybersecurity

was bigger than staying in my country and running my bakery. Although I continue to take care of the business by checking salaries, looking at the monthly budget, and checking customers satisfaction, I have a partner who takes care of daily business.

Learning about a new culture and knowing how people overseas live were two of my priorities. Thus, living in the US has taught me the citizens are very polite and helpful. I have many examples, but I would choose the most important two. One is I remember the day I went to Main Street, and I could not park my car because it was super hard. Someone offered me help and parked the car for me. The other time was when I went to Washington DC to do something with SACM; something happened to my tire and my kids were with me. I could not do anything; I pulled off and started thinking. Suddenly a woman with her husband stopped by and offered to change my tire. I will never ever forget the help that they gave. Also, I have learned many things from citizens like holding doors open for other people, smiling, and saying, “Hi.”

Finally, I would like to finish up with some advice. Believing in yourself and giving yourself a chance is the key to success. Sometimes I think what if I told myself that day when I got accepted to this scholarship that “It is hard, and I am not going to make it.” Everything would have ended before it started. I hope my story will give students hope that life is exciting and beautiful as we learn and grow through different experiences.