

Team Telomere Scholarship Essay

I will not let my telomere disorder define me, and that includes when it comes to education. When I was a senior in high school, I finished up my senior project while sick from chemotherapy and radiation when I got my bone marrow transplant. It is hard to do research when I could not keep my food down. At the end of my freshman year of college, I had to take a long break from my studies because I needed a liver transplant and was mostly bedridden for almost a year. Fortunately, after a long wait and getting very sick, I received a life-saving liver transplant in 2019. I have just re-registered for classes and am returning to my studies as a psychology student at Liberty University on-line.

This scholarship will have a positive impact on me and my education. Not only will it help me pay for school, I want to use my education to help the families of military men and women with post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury. I am very proud of my father, and my dad is my hero. He was wounded in Afghanistan and came home with both PTSD and TBI. The war changed him in a way that causes a lot of stress for all of us. He is not the same as he was before combat, which hurts all of us.

I want to focus on helping families as well as the veteran because PTSD and TBI affects the entire family. Just as the veteran can be suffering from anxiety, depression, and memory loss, his or her frustrations can come out onto the family, even though it is unintended. The departments of defense and veterans' affairs do have some programs for military men and women and veterans, but there really is not much available for their families. There does not seem to be enough resources to help the families, and I want to fix that to help repair relationships in these families that have already sacrificed so much for America.

By getting my degree in psychology, I hope to develop programs to help families cope with the changes in their loved-ones. I know what it is like to live with anger and frustration due to PTSD and TBI in my own father. By learning about how the mind works, I can develop age-appropriate techniques to help family members understand what has happened to their loved ones and help them cope. One thing I hope to do is develop a series of children's books that are fun and help explain to younger children that their daddy or mommy still loves them, but the war changed who they are. I want them to know that these changes are not their fault, but they can help in the healing process too. This scholarship will help me reach my goals of helping these very important people. I hope Team Telomere will help me achieve my future goals.