

## Today's Choices Shape My Future

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After three years of high school classes, I wanted to do something different in my senior year. I've always been interested in science, so I signed up to spend half of each school day training to be an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). The first day was definitely not what I expected.

First, there were the rules--fifteen pages double-sided, single-spaced. Uniforms, midnight blue, they said. Hands out of pockets. Walk single file down the hallways, right shoulder as close to the wall as possible. Stand when an officer walks into the room. Pushups for misdemeanors. I went home that afternoon thinking I had made a huge mistake.

While I had expected the training to be different from high school classes, it was far more challenging than I had imagined. The intensity was high the first couple of weeks to weed out the less-motivated and perhaps the pushup- challenged. Two months later, our class of thirteen is now six. This isn't high school anymore. The lessons I learn here I have to remember, because my ability to use what I've been taught will affect not just my grade, but also the well- being of anyone I end up treating.

It has become more than a class to me. Everything I learn has an immediate application. If I don't know the flow rates for oxygen, I can't administer it to a patient. If I don't know how to make a splint, I can't immobilize a fracture. I have found that the more I learn, the more I want to learn.

From years of playing soccer, I have learned the importance of working together. Training to be an EMT requires an even greater degree of teamwork and responsibility. When we carry people down stairs, if my partner and I do not communicate effectively, we put ourselves and the patient in danger. It's challenging, but I find satisfaction in being part of a team and cooperating with others to achieve something I can't do by myself.

While I don't have any thrilling ambulance stories yet, I do have a new perspective on the kind of person I want to be--a person who can manage a crisis situation, work effectively as part of a team and part of a larger organization.

This year has been more daunting than I could have possibly imagined, far beyond the realm of the typical high school experience. It has been scary, intimidating, exhausting, and immensely gratifying all at the same time. I have a new appreciation for the importance of doing things right, and have gained the strength and confidence to take on the challenges of life in college and beyond. As a result of this experience, I now plan to pursue pre-medical studies in college. This year, choosing to do something out of the ordinary has made all the difference.