

BEING TOUGH

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[Assignment: Write a definition essay by choosing a word which represents a value especially important to you and define it so that your readers will understand both what you mean by it and why it is important that readers understand that meaning.]

(1) As I was lying in my hospital bed, I was thinking to myself--life was such a waste! My mom was dead, and I was incapable of eating, talking, and walking on my own. What would I become--a cripple or a handicapped person, someone who has to rely on others in order to survive in life? Just then, my high school wrestling coach walked into my room, just as he had every day since I was admitted to the St. Francis Rehabilitation Hospital. It was always nice to see Coach Young. Actually, it was the highlight of each day because we joked around and laughed about school and the hospital. On this day, coach brought me a gift, a cardboard poster of a wrestler covered all over with signatures and messages from all of my teammates and friends at school. At the bottom, there was a prominent message from Coach Young: "Tough Times Don't Last but Tough People Do!" I thought, "Great, wonderful!" this was all I needed: a coach who practiced philosophy on the side. What I didn't realize, however, was that these words would be the words I would live my remaining life by.

(2) What does it mean to be a tough person? Is it someone who is big and strong, who could beat the hell out of five guys by himself? Mr. T and Lawrence Taylor are examples of tough guys who could knock a person into the next month without working up a sweat. Well, in our society, people who are thought of as being tough are usually the ones who are physically superior. They can be athletes, construction workers, lumberjacks, people in the military, anyone who has a physically straining job, or anyone who possesses physical strength beyond that of "normal" people. This is what we expect and imagine a tough person to be: powerful, husky, strong, robust, and hard as nails; and these are all characteristics that pertain to the outer self of a person.

(3) Although our world may regard only those who are physically strong as being tough, the truly tough people I'm referring to are those who have internal strength. Many times they don't possess extraordinary physical strength, but, instead, have a tremendous amount of heart. People like this are often very dedicated, determined, and conscientious about the things they do in life, but also highly optimistic about life. They know that "Tough Times Don't Last," and they use these times as learning experiences to build from. More often than not, these difficulties serve as an incentive to achieve even more, and more than others expect of them. They show others that a person's inner strength in his heart

and soul can be far stronger than any outside force.

(4) One example of a person who exemplifies this kind of inner strength and determination is Rocky Blier. During the Vietnam War he suffered a severe foot injury that left him missing part of his left foot. Doctors said that he would never walk again, let alone play pro football. However, Rocky wasn't ready to end his career, so, through years of agonizing rehabilitation and painful, disappointing workouts on his own, he finally achieved his dream of playing pro football. And the rest is history--four Super Bowl rings with the Pittsburgh Steelers. Another person who typifies this drive to succeed when things are bad is Rick Allen, the drummer for the rock group Def Leppard. At the top of his field, he was involved in an automobile accident. Driving his Corvette, he slid into a tree; the hood buckled and shot through his windshield. Luckily, he ducked but the hood sliced off his left arm. People said his career was over but this was not the case. After three or four years of rehabilitation, he has come back into the limelight of show business; his group is on top and he is playing the drums once again.

(5) Getting out of the hospital was the starting point for my own comeback in life. It also was a chance for me to show the world, especially the experts, that I was tough. Through working hard in school and participating in sports, I managed to graduate with my own class and regain confidence in myself as a person. I even played on the varsity soccer team for two years and finished in the top fourth of my class academically. This is not to say that my tough times are over yet, but I believe and hope I have already made it through the toughest. But now I know, and want to share my conviction with others: a person's will and determination can conquer any tough time in life.