

During my freshman year in high school, I participated in a service trip to Cambodia. It was quite the experience, which is ironic because I had originally not wanted to take part on this trip. See, previous to the trip to Cambodia, I had went on several other service trips to Manila, Philippines, and the experiences hold a special place in my heart. I had my heart set on going back to the Philippines for our annual Week Without Walls because I was so sure that I would enjoy it. However, my parents disapproved. They felt as though I was too stubborn and narrow-minded. They wanted me to explore other areas and go to different places. Therefore, I decided that Cambodia would be the next best choice.

To be honest, I was really pessimistic about the trip. I was so convinced that I'd have a bad time. There were times during the trip when I would exclude myself from certain group activities because of my mindset; I kept telling myself that joining them would be no fun. However, somewhere along the line, I realized that having a bad attitude would not make the trip more enjoyable. In fact, it would just make it worse. I decided to throw away my attitude and change to a more optimistic point of view. I began to have a lot more fun. For example, I did not like the group I was assigned to, and I was almost certain that it would be difficult to have a good time with them. My mindset gradually became more and more negative as I realized that we were to teach older students; I thought to myself that it would be awkward and annoying. In reality, it was slightly awkward at first and we were quite uncertain on how to approach the students. To our surprise, the students were very enthusiastic and welcoming. It was then that I realized that it wasn't going to be so bad; so I decided to try my best to get along with the people and I had a blast. We played several games together and sang songs together. Three of the students even attempted to teach me how to play the guitar! I really enjoyed it; there was a lot of laughter and joy amongst us. Looking back to it now, words cannot convey just how much I miss the new friends I've made there. I don't remember them all by name, but I miss them and I'm certain that if I ever do return and visit, they'll all just be as welcoming as they were the first time we met.

To this day, I still view a lot of different happenings and events in a negative attitude. I suppose that's just me, but I'm learning to change into a person who is more optimistic. Change is difficult and seems almost impossible, but I'm willing to push myself into a being a better person. I've learned that I'm here on this earth to learn and to experience. In order to properly explore all aspects of life, I have to be optimistic about life itself and whatever it throws at me. A positive attitude is all that is needed in order to make something great.