

June 23, 2009

Many unique individuals from several different places have walked through the same doors at St. Gregory that you did. It really doesn't matter how, what, or who got you here. What matters now is that you're here! When I first got to here I felt beaten up, broken down, and completely hopeless. I never have to feel that way again. I exhausted all other options and supposed solutions that I thought would "fix my problem." St. Gregory was, honestly, a last resort for me. Since nothing worked before, what made this so different? The approach and ideas behind this program were different and maybe that was what I needed to solve my problem. I quickly found that the problem was not an external substance, person, or event...it was me. So, one problem solved, but another arose...who am I?

Over the next eight weeks I got to know someone that I had forgotten about. I was reminded of my values, strengths, goals and what motivates me to succeed in life. In this world, and even at St. Gregory, it is very easy to lose sight of those things and become distracted. By being thorough, dedicated, diligent and focused, it is amazing how quickly I remembered who I was, who I strived to be, and where I wanted to go with my life. A very wise instructor here once told me, "Self-knowledge and self-awareness is power." She was right and that is something that I will always keep with me.



A couple words of advice that I want to give you are: be open-minded and try to get out of your comfort zone; attend all of your classes and be prepared; be on time to seminars; use study hall wisely; take advantage of your gym time; go on the activities and enjoy them; try new things; stop and notice the small things.

They call this a retreat for a reason, use it as such. If you are scared or angry tell someone. These emotions come out as a result of fear. You will quickly see that, more times than not, fear is at the root of what got you here. Be painstakingly honest. Share those deep, dark secrets with your instructor or another staff member. They are amazing, patient and truly gifted people. Use them. Let their talents and compassion help comfort you. They will never judge or shame you. You have probably had enough of that. Be mindful of others and how your actions affect them. You never know what kind of day someone is having. Ask them how they're doing and listen to their response. The other guests here will, inevitably, become your best friends, allies, and a major part of your support system. Let them in. Slowly let your walls down. Every day will feel like a brick is lifted off of your back. Be patient with yourself and others. Stay positive and upbeat, especially when you don't feel like it. It will not only change your day, but those around you too. Set daily goals and accomplish them. You'll be amazed what that can do for your self-esteem.



Nobody told me that this would be easy...they just said it would be worth it. St. Gregory helped save my life and I'm finally ready to start living again. Another instructor here told us, "How you practice is how you will perform." So, practice how you want to live your life while you're here. It will prepare you for the world that awaits you outside of these walls.

I've shared my experience of my first few minutes after stepping through the doors here with many new guests. I walked in, took a look around and saw that people were laughing, joking and truly happy. I thought to myself, "What do these people have to be so happy about?" I know now! I am that person that I envied so much when I first arrived.

My hope for you is that you can find that same inner-peace, joy and happiness that I've found. You deserve it! My prayers are with you. Best of luck on your journey!

*K.B., Former Guest
Orlando, Florida*

