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## Brace Yourself.: College Admission Essay Sample

I walk to the waiting area and call, “Michelle,” and she follows me into a big room with three beige, reclining leather chairs. “Have a seat,” I urge, directing her as if I’m a hostess. “Are you ready?” She nods her head; her shoulders tense up, and she lays back against the headrest.

“Is it going to hurt?”

I place my hand on her shoulder, look into her eyes, and smile reassuringly. I tell her what all doctors are trained to say: “It might be a little uncomfortable. I was in your chair once, and it’s so worth it.” Her body relaxes as she flashes a silver smile back at me, and I call Dr. Sanford, the orthodontist, into the room.

In my sophomore year, just two months after my braces were removed, I began working for my orthodontist. My fresh, brace-less pearly smile had given me new-found confidence, and I wanted to share that gift with others. After discussing my interest in orthodontics with the doctor, I discovered he was in search of a clinical assistant. Unsure of the job description, I jumped at the opportunity. The next day, I wore my new work uniform: roomy black scrubs with an oversized pocket (for my curing light) and a blue tie-dyed shirt imprinted with “Alexa” in glitter letters.

I quickly picked up the skills to document patients’ charts, assist in bonding braces and x-ray preparation. I mastered the challenging and rewarding task of making a flawless retainer. This is an art, as it requires working quickly with fast-setting gloppy plaster. Like an octopus, I’ve perfected techniques to concurrently hold five tools in my hands while simultaneously reaching for the curing light in my pocket. I race from chair to chair speed-typing patient charts, my adrenaline pumping for hours at a time. I feel like I’m wearing roller skates. I thrive on being part of this fast paced office. Like a well-oiled gear in a machine, I’m a vital employee who helps the office run efficiently. I am only in high school, but the responsibility requires all my energy.

Apparently, so did junior year academics. Last year, I remember returning home at 8:00 pm, running upstairs, opening my AP Psychology textbook and trying to read the words on the pages like a laser beam, almost forgetting to breathe in between tasks. Week after week, I found myself exhausted from a seven-hour school day followed by a five-hour work day, feeling helpless with a night of homework ahead. As I watched my stellar grades decline, I felt myself falling. The girl with nearly perfect grades crashed and lost control of her schoolwork. But I push through hard situations and do not quit. However, during my mid-term week I realized

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something had to change. The only solution was to drastically reduce my work hours, one of the hardest decisions I've ever made.

My junior year wake-up call reminded me I couldn't have everything ...at seventeen. I couldn't work the hours of a demanding professional job after school, squeeze in extracurricular activities, and maintain superior grades. My priorities had to be reset with academics on top, even if I was emotionally ready for an adult job. I am a mature teen, and yet, maturity does not by any means make me an adult. While maturity has given me a more perceptive outlook on life, it hasn't yet provided me with all the tools to handle the challenges of the "adult world." As my mom would say, "I'm not fully baked yet." I know that the experiences that lie ahead of me at college will serve as a bridge between my teen mature self and adulthood. Despite the fact that I broke my record of straight A's, my days in that office unleashed my passion for a career in the medical field.

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