

12/10/2023

Dear Mr. Chris Gardner,

I am writing to share how your book has given me a long-term reminder that struggle is only temporary with perseverance. My name is Saray-al Butler and what I love more than video games is good literature. Your book *The Pursuit of Happyness* was a very emotional, intense, and inspirational book, which had an emotional grip factor!

Mr. Gardner I do not know what it feels like to be homeless, but your words from your experiences make me feel like I do. My mom shared with me about how she too was a homeless parent, while pregnant and with a toddler. They would visit the Day Center for needed essentials. Mama said it was not very safe for women and children down there, so she made sure to keep my brother in her sight. I do not remember experiencing such hardship, and it is sad that my brother remembers even just a little. I have come to realize that not everyone's life is easy, even influential persons experience hardships. There will always be challenges and if you do well or your best, you will get rewarded.

Some people think teenagers have not experienced enough to become stressed, but they are mistaken. The life of a 13 year-old is stressful. School, home, puberty, friends, and church are some examples. I experienced the negative effect of peer pressure and social media. And even though my mom taught me the impact on such things, at 10 years old I decided to take my own route. The outcome was a four year consequence for an action that I knew was unethical. I owned up to my mistake, accepted my consequence, and worked every day to redeem myself, my integrity, and my moms trust. In the third year, I was rewarded with being released of my consequence a year early. My mother's love is endless. If I do wrong, she will get in my rump, but she is always intentional.

Although I read your book after my personal experience, I am able to think about how much I mentally and physically grew over that three year time span. And just like you, I did not give up! You pushed forward with all you had to ensure that your family's future would be lucrative. Reading your book has allowed me to appreciate my mother more. She could have stayed homeless and raised us on the streets, but she did not. Just like you, she picked herself up and did what she needed to do. As I am writing this letter, my eyes have started to water because I did my best and MY best was good enough.

Your book will be a reminder to keep doing my best, even when things get tough. You wanted to be a successful stockbroker. You reached and surpassed your goal. If that is not perseverance, I do not know what is. I believe having your son made you work harder. We tend to do better when

we have someone supporting us. I feel your supporter was your son, which made you more determined to succeed.

You showed self-improvement. If you were unsuccessful, you worked hard to succeed. Once I understood what self-improvement meant, I did not think of it as another one of those words that adults use to get kids to perform better. You know, those teachers that shout out, “Self-Improvement! Work on self-improvement!”, but do not give kids directions on what to do to reach it or what it even means. Self-improvement is a necessity. We need to learn how to self-improve because many people will tell you when you do wrong, but very few will show you what to do to get it right.

In your book you said “Success is not the key to happiness, happiness is the key to success.” I thought about what this quote meant to me, then concluded that it meant that once you find your true happiness, then is when you are the most successful. I can be successful, but what will it mean if I am melancholy? You also said, “The world is your oyster. It’s up to you to find the pearl.” This means there are milestones that produce challenges in life, but it is going to be how and what you do to overcome them. My mom says, “If it is not a challenge, then you are not learning enough.” Your book has helped me appreciate its moral.

Pastor & author Charles Swindoll said life is 10% of what happens to us and 90% of how we react. This explains why some fail and never progress. I commend you for reclaiming your life!

Mr. Gardener I admire your story. You are forever an inspiration to me.

Love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Saraya-al Butler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'S' and 'B'.

Saray-al Butler