Learn and grow from difficulties

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Arts, Year 3

Roy Chan, a postgraduate student with dyslexia, admits that coping and dealing with his own disability is difficult. His struggles include comprehending reading assignments, completing exams on time and following directions being taught in class. In addition, he constantly deals with short-term auditory memory as well as short-term visual memory. “The most difficult part of my life is to read a textbook and use pictographic and phonetic elements to fully understand what a text implies,” he says.

Roy is a postgraduate student in the Faculty of Education at HKU, and he often seeks help through the Counselling and Personal Enrichment (CoPE) Section offered by CEDARS. He mentions particularly his counsellor Ms Iris Lam, and the Senior Student Advisor (Accessibility Support) Ms Michele Fok, and wishes to say thank you to them.

“CEDARS would like to provide you with equal learning opportunities to participate fully in the HKU’s rich and diverse student life. If you have a disability that has an impact on your studies, CEDARS can assist you in overcoming barriers and achieving a successful university education. For more information, please contact the Counselling and Personal Enrichment (CoPE) Section of CEDARS at cedars-accessibility@hku.hk. You may also contact the Equal Opportunity Unit (http://hku.hk/eounit) and the University Health Service (http://hku.hk/uhs) of the University for support.”

If you were blindfolded, would you have the confidence to walk around the campus? To Shuk-yi, a Year 1 visually impaired Arts student, such a situation is a daily occurrence. But she has bravely adapted to university life, with the help of CEDARS. She is positive in the face of the different challenges of campus life, and this attitude reminds all of us to treasure the gifts we have.

Shuk-yi’s vision deteriorated when she was in Form 3 at school. “I was afraid of the discontinuing of my studies, because I was in mainstream school,” she recalls. Fortunately, the Education Bureau provided a resource teacher for her so that she was able to finish her secondary education.

Entering HKU through JUPAS, her university study habits are similar to most students at HKU, apart from the way she reads notes. On the fourth floor of the Main Library, there are several computers with special audio software, which enables her to read information on the internet. Examinations are also held in this room. Shuk-yi jokes: “It is just like a VIP room where I always get a seat!” She feels thankful to people who provide the support for her, namely her friends, HKU staff, and the staff at CEDARS.

“The staff at CEDARS helps me to inform professors to send me lecture notes in soft copy. Also, they provide volunteers to help with the converting and scanning work, which makes my university life easier,” she says. “More importantly, I attended a very useful talk organised by CEDARS, where different departments and facilities on this campus were introduced to us.”

For Shuk-yi, preparation is everything. Before the semester starts, she usually goes to different classroom venues in order to get familiar with their location. Walking in the campus is not a big problem to her. “There are tactile markers on the library floors. And most lifts at HKU give off sound so that I know where to go.”

Although Shuk-yi is unsure of her future career, she says she wants to work with NGOs to help other visually impaired people. If she can navigate the demands of university life and maintain a desire to help others, surely we can too.

For full version of the article, visit: http://cedars.hku.hk/download/brightlife.pdf