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Mathematical Autobiography

If I was to describe mathematics I would describe it as using numbers to solve problems. I know that is a very vague description, but to me math itself to me is very vague. Ever since I started learning math I found it to be very difficult. To this day I still do not understand how to do percentages and struggle with fractions. I have always had a dislike for math as I can remember.

I have the very distinct memory of being taught long division in elementary school and while trying to learn the equations I started to cry because it was so hard for me to understand. I have always wanted to understand and be good at math but it is just very difficult for me to grasp. I feel like I have always had this dislike for math because I hate being told that I am wrong. With math I feel like there is only one answer and everything else was wrong. In my case I could never get the right answer and therefore felt like a failure at math.

In middle and high school my dislike for math turned into hate. I had a very hard Algebra professor in high school. She was a veteran from the military and loved using strict guidelines in class. She enforced the need to get the right answer and anything other than the answer was considered wrong. We would go around the room and read off our answers to the homework and if you got the answer wrong you would have to do it out the work on the board in front of the whole class. I found myself often getting the answers on the homework wrong and I would always have to go up to the board and work out the problem in front of the class which I found to be very embarrassing. I literally felt anxious whenever I even thought of going into that class.

I do find math very important in everyday life. I think because our world revolves around money, math is imperative to surviving. I also waitress several days a week, and with his job you need at least some knowledge of math. Even to this day when I am paid in cash and I need to make change I feel a little anxious because I know I need to do the math in order to give them back the right amount of change. I rely on a calculator most of the time but I wish I could do the math in my head because it would be much easier.

After only a couple days of taking Math Explorations I feel like I can see math in a new light. Previous to this class I was taught how to get answers but not why those answers were true. I feel like many parts of our society work that way now; we live our lives going through steps one after another but we do not stop to think why. I would love to understand math more, especially critical thinking. I feel like math helps us to think in a very different way that how we usually do. Math forces us to use reasoning and patterns opposed to simply writing down an answer and hoping it is correct.