

If you told me that lifting a heavy metal bar would save me, I wouldn't have believed you. I never thought weightlifting would teach me so much about myself, guiding me through anxiety and depression and teaching me the value of diligence. These trapped me in my mind, making me feel like I had no control over my own body. Discovering weightlifting was pivotal—it taught me that small improvements over time, showing up consistently and pushing through discomfort, can transform mental and physical well-being. I believe this same mindset will prepare me for dental school and the responsibility of patient care. Success in dentistry, like weightlifting, requires attention to detail, a commitment to long-term growth, and resilience in the face of challenges. Weightlifting has shown me that persistence, no matter the difficulty, is the key to growth. Small, consistent efforts have built my resilience, both mentally and physically. Maintaining a structured workout routine taught me the importance of showing up, even on my worst days. This discipline has translated directly into my academic and personal life, whether I was studying for the DAT, managing a heavy course load, or facing personal setbacks, I applied the discipline I gained from weightlifting. Strengthening my body also strengthened my mind, teaching me how to stay focused and push through obstacles. There were days when simple tasks like getting out of bed or brushing my teeth felt insurmountable. My experiences with anxiety gave me a deep understanding of how isolating life can feel, and shaped my desire to help patients feel seen, understood, and supported, particularly when they feel vulnerable about their dental issues. Just as fitness helped me regain control over my mental health, I want to help others regain control of their well-being through dentistry. Beyond fitness, my passion for helping others has driven me in all my extracurricular activities. Volunteering with an early intervention program for children with autism taught me the importance of patience, empathy, and effective communication—useful skills in healthcare. My role as the Graphic Design Chair for my sorority taught me how to balance creativity with leadership and collaboration. I've always loved creating and working with my hands, whether it's painting, drawing, sculpting, or crocheting, and I know this creative ability will aid me in my future career as a dentist. My aunt, aware of my artistic side, suggested I explore healthcare careers that combine creativity with precision. She mentioned a colleague who had merged his love of art with surgery. I began researching healthcare fields that require both artistic talent and technical skill, and dentistry quickly stood out. The precision involved in procedures, the ability to transform a smile, and the combination of science and artistry made it clear to me that dentistry was the perfect fit. Working as a dental assistant has only solidified this decision. I love listening to patients' unique stories, which allows me to connect with them not just as a healthcare provider but as a person. I've had the chance to refine my skills with instruments, familiarize myself with dental procedures, and connect with patients on a personal level. These hands-on experiences have deepened my passion for dentistry and my desire to develop the skills necessary to become an effective dentist. Through my fitness journey, I've learned the smallest steps can lead to the most significant changes, whether in the gym, life, or dentistry. The discipline, resilience, and empathy I developed through weightlifting have transformed me both mentally and physically, preparing me to tackle the challenges of dental school. My passion for fitness, along with my experiences in volunteering, leadership, and dental assisting, has shaped my commitment to helping others feel empowered and understood. Just as I pushed myself to grow stronger in the gym, I am ready to embrace the challenges of dentistry with perseverance knowing each patient

interaction, every small success, and continuous improvement will bring me closer to my goal of making a meaningful impact in the lives of others.