

# Integrity: My Yellow Brick Road

John Wooden once stated that “the things that you do when no one’s looking are the things that define you.” Identity “allows people to stand out as individuals [and] develop a sense of well being and importance” (Why is Identity So Important?). When no one is looking, are you going to study for your Spanish quiz or will you watch the baseball game? Dedication is essential in having a positive identity. Without dedication, people would be rude, selfish, disrespectful, and irresponsible. Dedication creates a path through life and leads a person through their own yellow brick road. Having an articulation error and working to correct it strengthened my value of dedication.

My character and value of dedication strengthened because of my articulation errors. All 52 Tuesdays of the year, I would wake up at 6 am to go to speech therapy. From the time I was able to talk, my speech always sounded off, but everyone thought this was because I was young, and it could be easily fixed. When I turned four, my speech errors didn’t change; nor did they improve when I was 5. I started to go to Children’s National Medical Center for speech therapy with Dr. Harris. My speech was getting better, and my articulation errors were almost gone. When I was eight, I graduated from speech therapy. Without dedication, I would have quit speech. I spent countless hours practicing, but once I got a seizure, they all became pointless. I had to

repeat all of my work before the seizure. This time, my speech therapy was at University of Maryland Speech and Hearing Clinic with Ms. Mont and the student-clinicians. I could have quit and still have major articulation errors, but I did not give up. I wanted to sound normal and not have someone say “What?” whenever I talked. For 2 years, I have been going to UMD for speech therapy. Dedication was my yellow brick road to end my speech errors.

Being dedicated to speech helped me value dedication. When I fail, I do not give up. Before I started going to speech therapy, I would give up and not finish what I started once it became challenging. I am currently working on my torah and haftorah for my bar mitzvah, and at the beginning I had a lot of trouble. Even though it was challenging, I did not give up. I gave 110% and after 3 months, I can sing the whole haftorah and I am currently working on the torah. Speech therapy taught me dedication.

Dedication is a very important value in my life. Without dedication, I would be half the man I am today. When no one is looking, I would stop studying for my Spanish test and watch the baseball game. Because of speech, I would stick with the Spanish test instead of watching the game. My values and character was shaped by speech therapy.