

**Topic: Write about a hard time and how you learned from it**

**General Essay (Draft 3, 635 words)**

"Fine, make today your last day then," said the restaurant owner when I asked him about my future schedule. Surprise instantly overwhelmed me, I was confident that I predicted every possible outcome, but I didn't see this coming. I gazed at him with an emotionless stare — despite being confused and angry — studying his body language in a desperate attempt to understand what I did wrong. Questions raced through my mind. *Did he just throw away my hundred of hours of hard work that quickly? No hesitation? Was I ever appreciated?* I managed to mutter, "Okay." He then explained that my commitment was necessary as I trained new workers and ran the shop when he could not. I looked at him, puzzled, reminding him of our conversations about the uncertainty surrounding my school schedule and my family responsibilities. I even asked him to let me figure things out once school starts. But my arguing and rationality ended when he called me "unprofessional."

Ouch.

My job was simple: take orders, make boba teas, run food, clean, and listen to the owner's directions. I did just that, maybe too much. Since I've never had a job, I didn't know what to expect, especially from a small five-person business. Nonetheless, I earned the trust of the owner in just a couple weeks. This meant fully running the shop, organizing catering orders, solving problems independently, and teaching new employees.

"Unprofessional."

So, the million-dollar question is... Why?

I lied. Million-dollar *questions*... Why? Why did he call me unprofessional? Why weren't ex-coworkers called unprofessional too? And what is my new obsession with that word?

Short answer: He was hurt that his hyper-efficient, dare I say *inhuman*, drink stirrer and order taker has school and a family.

Serious short answer: I wanted to act as professional as possible, unskilled labor or not. I knew I could prove I had more potential than a server and drink maker. I satisfied the unspoken needs of the owner that he didn't even know he had since my co-workers did the minimum and the owner was looking for someone he could trust. I was hired out of necessity, then became a necessity; therefore, my departure (technically his choice)... was unprofessional...

Good, perfect even. I'm glad he called me that, and I am glad I felt betrayed. Now I understand those reactions were the result of pushing expectations and making an impact. I wasn't just

another dispensable pawn in someone else's game, and I never want to be one. Expectations aren't meant to be met but exceeded. This working experience illuminated this concept to me as you don't mean anything to anyone or even yourself if you let expectations and guidelines limit you. I realized the disservice I do to myself when I don't try harder and push the limit. Now, I can see all the unrealized potential that I have left behind in my life. Limiting yourself also is a disservice to others. For example, you don't try to improve on a recipe, which you know is just *okay*, but keep serving it to your family because the food is *fine*. Wrong, we all know *fine* means *horrible*, don't serve your family horrible food.

I call it the "Unprofessional Philosophy." Nothing — no action, job, or task — has a limit, no matter how unprofessional or menial the task seems. Do an excellent job, so if you disappear, you will be missed since great things are only noticed when gone. Nothing worthless is missed. Be valuable, be missed.

So yes, in a year, my brother will really miss a sparkly white bathroom, and my family will, hopefully, miss my cooking.

So, thank you. Thank you for calling me unprofessional.