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## Former Junyuan Secondary student gets into 'dream school' after learning to manage stress



Tiffany Chee achieved a LIR4 of 16, meeting her conditional offer to study biomedical science at Temasek Polytechnic. PHOTO: JUNYUAN SECONDARY SCHOOL

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SINGAPORE - Former Junyuan Secondary student Tiffany Chee has met her conditional offer to study biomedical science at Temasek Polytechnic (TP).

The 17-year-old learnt on Wednesday (Jan 11) afternoon that she had achieved a respectable LIR4 of 16 - which is the sum of her O-level score for English and four relevant subjects.

"Although I am not really satisfied, I know I did my best," said Tiffany, who was aiming for 14 points.

But she added: "Now that I've made it into my dream school, I will study even harder."

It was a good day for Tiffany, but the path to achieving her goal has not been easy.

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Between mid-2015 and early last year (2016), she experienced severe stomach cramps and nausea every time she ate, and had blood in her stools afterwards.

"I was too scared to eat, so I stopped eating, and my weight got lower until I became underweight," said Tiffany, who applied to TP via the Early Admissions Exercise in Secondary 5.

During this period, she visited the Accident and Emergency Department 15 times, and was hospitalised five times. She missed many lessons and her grades suffered.

To make matters worse, her family was also facing financial problems.

While doctors in the four hospitals she visited could not determine what the problem was, for Tiffany the cause seems clear.

"I think it was really due to stress," she said, noting that the problems went away after she started exercising regularly.

Tiffany, who now runs and hikes with her parents, said one of the biggest lessons she learnt was figuring how to pace herself.

Rather than overestimating how much she could achieve in a single day, she started to take greater care to schedule breaks in between.

Said Tiffany: "I was always very tense and worried I wouldn't do a job well."

Later, she realised that she "needed to learn to relax to get the job done better".

Through hard work, a positive attitude, and support from her parents, friends and teachers, she managed to score an A1 in Combined Science (Bio/Chem) in Secondary 4, one of the O-level subjects she took at the Express level.

In Secondary 2, Tiffany also stopped taking private tuition as her busy schedule as a member of the student council and guitar ensemble meant she kept having to postpone lessons.

This spurred her to take greater ownership over her own learning.

"In the past, if I didn't understand something in class, I would tell myself, it's okay, I have tuition. After stopping tuition, I would clarify things with my teacher in class, or meet the teacher after school."

Being the school's first Normal (Academic) student council president in Secondary 3 also came with its own challenges.

Tiffany was apprehensive at first.

She said: "I would stutter, I was nervous and afraid people would judge me. But after a few months, I got the hang of it. When you keep practising something you are uncomfortable with, you get better at it."

She wants to become a pediatrician one day - an ambition reinforced by her encounters with cancer-stricken children at KK Women's and Children's Hospital when she was warded there .

Tiffany, who since last November (2016) has been working at a shoe shop to save enough money to treat her family to a holiday in April, remembers the months leading up to her O levels as a particularly difficult time.

Still, she said: "I am glad it happened. Even though it was the most difficult (chapter) of my life, it was also the most touching. I learnt that there were people who would be there for me."