

Peace Gill

I'm from Derbyshire, England and came to Mississippi College to play soccer. I met Lauren at a college career fair while I was a senior and looking for a temporary job following graduation. I was majoring in Psychology and minoring in Kinesiology, and had never considered being a Personal Care Assistant or even working in that career in any capacity until meeting Lauren. Although I had come into contact with multiple individuals living with disability, I had never spent long at any given time interacting with those individuals. When I met Lauren, I was walking through a season where I felt God challenging me about what it really meant to 'love' people and saw working for Lauren as an opportunity to do just that. What better way to practice loving someone than go completely out of your comfort zone to serve them?

There were a few things that I was nervous about when starting work with Lauren, the biggest being that I had never spent too much time around anyone with a disability so I was a little worried about interacting without it feeling awkward. This didn't even last past the first day because I realized very quickly that interacting with Lauren was just the same as with anyone else, and it wasn't awkward at all. I was also a little worried about doing some of the more 'personal' care tasks as this was something I had never done or seen myself doing. As soon as I realized that these tasks only felt uncomfortable to me and not Lauren, I learned to just let go of my awkwardness and it quickly became something that I just did without even thinking about. Lauren was incredibly patient with me as I learned the details of being a PCA, and that definitely made it an easy transition.

Working on Team LC has taught me many things. Practically, I have learned about the reality of what life looks like for an individual living with disability. I now have a much greater appreciation and understanding for how different their lives are and the many barriers they face. I have learned the importance of having a quality Personal Care Team, and the unfortunate reality that many individuals with disability struggle to find that. For those who are not blessed enough to have a PCA team or family support system like Lauren does, it would be nearly impossible for them to live the life that each of us desires.

Personally, I have learned to develop a deeper level of empathy for others, a quality that is needed as a psychologist. I have learned to look at situations from multiple points of view, and think about things beyond their surface level - a skill transferable to all areas of personal and professional life. Although working with Lauren has only been for a temporary time, this year has been a huge year of personal growth for me. Lauren's ambition, determination and heart for other vulnerable individuals is incredible, and I am very blessed to have had a part to play in assisting her towards her goals.