

Dear [REDACTED]

Well, I must say, I was pleasantly surprised by our first webcam session. I imagine it sure beat the long trek to Milton. I certainly did admire your dedication and conviction each time you made that trip. To me, that spoke volumes of your decision to put value on yourself.

Currently, you've started looking into places to rent, and preparing to possibly go back to school in January. I was struck by your comment, "school is the next level because of the value I've put on myself." This got me interested in a number of things. I hope you don't mind if I share my curiosities with you:

*What does it feel like when you're putting value on yourself? (What are some words, feelings, sensations, or expressions that might describe this experience?)*

*Who are your allies in putting value on yourself?*

*What role might they have in helping you stay connected to that feeling?*

Currently, you're riding a wave of momentum that has you wanting to "achieve everything!" Although you were mindful that doing too much could cause the body to flare-up, you declared that it was "not okay to just sit still." Understandably though, this has gotten you questioning the potential impacts of MS on school and vice versa.

This led to us having a conversation about personal failure. You recounted the origins and history of failure being the biggest fear in your life. In the past it has been known to team-up with worry — more specifically, "*what-ifs...*" — creating a seriously powerful and persuasive force. Previously, this 'team' was successful at persuading you to take five years off after high school before pursuing post-secondary education. It is therefore with much awe and respect that I ask the following questions:

Given the enormous strength and intensity of *failure* and *what-ifs* to dominate a person's life, how did you manage to get yourself back in school after only five years, as opposed to 10 years, or not at all? I wondered if this took a certain strength of your own. What would you consider calling this strength?

You shared that this time around you "need to just do it." What does that statement mean for you? I wondered if that was sort of like making your mind up, or taking a leaf of faith, or perhaps something different.

Before we ended our session I had asked the following question: What does leaving the relationship with [REDACTED] say about you that's contrary to what "failure" would have you believe?

What difference will knowing this information have towards you staying connected to the value you've put on yourself? Furthermore, what future possibilities might it assist in opening up for you?

I hope this letter serves as a worthy adjunct to some of the themes from our last session. If you were at all moved to prepare your own responses, please don't feel pressured to have them ready by our next session. Some people find it beneficial to approach these sorts of things at their own pace and comfort level.

Sincerely,

Ari Shapero