



insidetrack



A good coach can save your life

Mateja Klaric's story

"When at age 40 I decided to return to college, it never occurred to me that I might need a coach."

My experience in high school was terrible. I never felt like a "good student" so jumping into the workforce after high school was the right fit for me. Two decades later I had built a great career in media and felt successful. However, not having a degree started to feel like it was holding me back and I became hungry to pursue a new field of study that would make me a better journalist and all around professional.

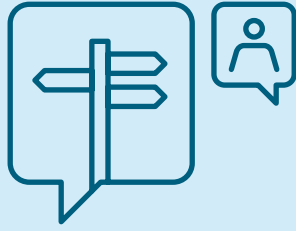
I enrolled in an online bachelor's program in psychology feeling more capable and motivated than ever before and it showed in my grades. As an adult, I was now a straight A student, self-disciplined, and capable of efficiently planning my time. I was at the top of my game.

It didn't bother me getting an occasional email from the InsideTrack coach my school provided but I admit I didn't think there was much he could do for me. My initial impression was that a coach or adviser was there to listen but they wouldn't really get what I was saying.

The few times I did reach out for something from my adviser it felt like she didn't care. I often felt passed around to various departments until I hit a wall. In the end, what I perceived as my adviser's indifference became so irritating that I asked her to please stop sending me generic template emails asking me how I was if she wasn't going to be of any real help. She complied without a reply.

I tried to get financial aid numerous times but as an international online student living in another country there were no options for me. I was able to manage the tuition expenses on my own until I unexpectedly lost my job. In my senior year of my program, I was suddenly left with no means to pay tuition. I was so close to graduation but now finishing my degree seemed impossible. Everything I had already invested in it would be lost. It was absolutely devastating and I didn't know where to turn.

Then, I received an email from my coach James Riley. It was the usual "how are things going" email he'd periodically send to make sure I knew he was always there to help. In the past, when he'd checked in with me, nothing was wrong so I admit I politely ignored most of his outreach. I replied by sharing my situation and asking for help but I didn't expect much in return and assumed this interaction would probably be a waste of my time and leave me just as frustrated. But it became clear



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that James wasn’t simply going through the motions, asking for the sake of asking, he genuinely cared. He didn’t dismiss me and forget all about my problems the moment he deleted my email as I’d imagined. He didn’t just respond with some polite, useless lip service or send me on another wild goose chase to call another department.

“James not only listened to what I was saying but actually HEARD me and DID something about it. It’s not much of an exaggeration to say that James saved my life ...” He stood by my side and offered me help and support when I thought everything was lost and hopeless. His words were comforting but it was his actions that spoke louder than any words could. And it was his patience and skill as a coach that eventually led me to figure out a solution to my financial aid issue. It turned out that all my hard work throughout my degree made me competitive for a scholarship for nontraditional students from an honors society. I applied and I won. I couldn’t get a loan from a bank but some of my friends were willing to lend me the rest of the money needed to graduate because they saw how important it was to me.

I did the work, but without the support of my coach, James, I never would have completed my degree. His help was invaluable not just because he helped me navigate an urgent financial situation, but because he truly and genuinely cared. He treated me like a human being, with more care and respect than I could ever hope for. That was what I really needed and I see that as the most important trait in a coach.

What James didn’t know at the time was that I was in a serious crisis when I finally reached out. Losing my job, the bank initiating foreclosure on my house, and suddenly faced with losing the one thing that had been keeping me going felt humiliating and I was seriously contemplating suicide. The possibility of making it to graduation was the only thing that kept me going.

“Had I not replied to his email and had James not taken time to make me feel heard and supported, I never would have made it.”

I share my story to show other students the kind of support they deserve and to encourage them to keep reaching out and not give up when things feel impossible. If they keep looking, hopefully someone like James will be there waiting to meet them.

Mateja Klaric. started to write short stories at 10 and later found herself in the role of a freelance journalist, video director, TV reporter, radio hostess, and now college graduate and psychologist. Her life resembles a roller coaster ride full of ups and downs and some pretty wild turns. Among other things, her car was destroyed by tanks and she survived several brushes with death. She recently graduated summa cum laude with a B.A. in Psychology and is about to launch her startup *Transform the Pain*, a counseling service that will help people cope with traumatic loss.