



Pamela A. Ploetz

You Can Only Control Your Choices

If you know Pam, you know that she cares about you. Pam is a lifelong learner who sees the whole picture and has a unique ability to put it in perspective for you. She is a great coach and mentor focusing not only on successful careers but also on success in life. Pam summarizes a few life lessons in this letter. She draws from her personal experiences, shares her thoughts on the situations life can sometimes hand you, and reminds you that you are only in control of your decisions.

Pam spent most of her career at the University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics in various roles, progressing from staff pharmacist to Associate Director of Pharmacy Practice, Education, and Research, and Director of Pharmacy Practice Residency. She was also Clinical Associate Professor for the University of Wisconsin School of Pharmacy. She served her profession as President of the Wisconsin Society of Hospitals and the Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin. Additionally she was Chairperson of the Wisconsin State Pharmacy Examining Board. She received her bachelor of science degree from the University of Wisconsin School of Pharmacy.

Pam teaches you to *take time when making core decisions and make sure they are the ones that are important to you.*



Dear Young Pharmacist,

We have all heard, “If I only knew then what I know now.” Obviously we can’t go back, but we can learn from those who have been there. Life is a series of choices. From a very early age we are all forced to make them. How do we avoid making bad

choices, and how do we make the good choices that move us further along in our careers?

You are not in control of most things presented in life. Life hands you situations, and they are yours to handle. You do not control which issues you will face, but you can control your choices of how to handle them. Some of the decisions you will make will have little or nothing to do with what is really important. Others really do matter, and you have to think them through carefully.

When I was young, my mother was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. She had a very difficult life and died when I was in college. This experience shaped my life from the get-go. I learned very early on that nothing assures you of good health. Many would say that they know that, but it forced me to explore and identify what was important *to* and *for* me. My dad encouraged me—I would say forced me—to do many things outside my comfort zone such as going to camp (and weeping with homesickness), playing softball with no natural athletic ability, taking swim lessons in the morning when I hated cold water, and staring at pea soup for hours sure that I would hate it. You get the picture! These and many more experiences plus thinking about what I liked or did not like resulted in greater self-knowledge. Some were negative, and some were positive. Upon reflection and looking for patterns, I discovered that my miserable feelings at camp were experienced once again when I applied to colleges far away from home. This then became one of my core decisions—I wanted to remain close to my family. Did that close doors and limit opportunities? Perhaps, but when those core decisions are made, then new opportunities and experiences present themselves. Decisions and choices become easier when they fit self-knowledge.

Self-knowledge also led to a career change. Early on, my practice was in the clinical areas, and I loved helping patients with their medications and working with the medical staff. I was a bit of a control freak and thought that there were definite improvements that could be made in the practice setting, the schedules, you name it. I was young and, believe me, I had answers. So I took on administrative roles only to learn that I was soon doing a less-than-optimal job taking care of the patients and showing little patience with the people I was hoping to lead into greater clinical practice. I eventually realized that I could