



## Dr. Ben Carson | Executive Summary

There were a lot of obstacles for me along the way to my dream of becoming a physician. Not the least of which involved the divorce of my parents early on. My mother, who was one of 24 children, got married at the age of 13. She and my father moved to Detroit from rural Tennessee. After some years, she found out he was a bigamist, and they divorced.

We moved to Boston where we resided in a neighborhood rife with sirens, gangs, and murders. I remember seeing people lying on the ground with bullet holes and stab wounds. Both of my older cousins that we lived with were killed, and I never expected to live to live beyond 25 years of age.

There was never money for anything. My mother was working two to three jobs at a time because she never wanted to be on welfare. With her third grade education she was very observant. She never had seen anybody go on welfare and come off of it. She didn't want that lifestyle for herself or her family.

My mother never developed a victim's mentality. She never felt sorry for herself. That was a good thing, but the problem was that she never felt sorry for us either. There was never an excuse that we could give that was acceptable for her. If someone doesn't accept your excuses, pretty soon you stop looking for excuses, and you start looking for reasons to be able to do something.

In elementary school, I was a horrendous student. The other students were pleased that I was in the classroom. They called me "dummy" but the reason they were so happy is because I was the safety net. You never had to worry about getting the lowest grade as long as I was around.

My mother was the only one who believed in me, and she was always trying to encourage me. To help me academically, she decided to turn off the TV set, required me to read two books a week from the Detroit Public Library, and made me submit book reports. She couldn't read them, but I didn't know that. She would mark and highlight the pages to convince me she was looking over them, but she wasn't.

At first, I really detested the book reports, but after a few weeks I actually began to enjoy reading. Between the covers of those books, it didn't matter if we didn't have any money because I could go anywhere in the world. I could be anybody, do anything. I could imagine myself in a laboratory conducting experiments. I began to know things that nobody else knew. Within the space of a year and a half I went from the bottom of the class to the top of the class, much to the consternation of all those students who used to laugh and call me "dummy."

I had the same brain when I was doing horribly as when I reached the top of my class. I just had a very different opinion of who I was.

### Action Plan:

- ✓ Ben Carson initially disliked doing book reports for his mother, but this act of discipline ended up propelling him into a career as a world-class neurosurgeon. Commit yourself to being disciplined in one area of life, even though you may not enjoy it. Keep yourself motivated by imagining the benefits and rewards of maintaining discipline in this area.
- ✓ Ben Carson's mother made the decision to limit the time her son spent in front of the television, and she helped him to find more profitable ways to use his time. Find one activity on which you squander your time and cut it out of your schedule.