

# “I was doing nothing with my life,” Hayley says. Now she’s working and applying for college.

“I was doing nothing with my life,” says Hayley. Mental health barriers, including social anxiety and depression, were holding her back and she struggled to find the motivation to finish her high school diploma.

An Ontario Works (OW) advisor suggested that she may need to go to college to qualify for the kind of work that she wanted. Hayley says that she also thought it would set a good example for her kids if she went back to school.

Hayley chose the Niagara College Academic Upgrading program to help her reach her goals. Initially, she attended the Niagara Falls campus because it was close to home. When that campus closed, she moved so that she could continue in the program at the Niagara-on-the-Lake campus.

“Fun!” is how she describes her experience. She says that her teachers were “great” and “amazing,” making the learning process easier for her.

She recounts that her ACE Communications professor encouraged her to try some new software so she could create a video in lieu of standing in front of her classmates to make a presentation. She was extremely pleased that her teacher found a way for her to meet the course requirement in a way that didn’t cause a flare-up of her social anxiety.

Hayley graduated with her grade 12 equivalency and an ACE Certificate, having completed six courses. She recently moved to Northern Ontario with her partner and was able to land a job within the first week of arriving in her new community.

Hayley is currently awaiting an admission decision from the Environmental Technician program at Cambrian College, close to her new home in the North.

She says that she would tell anyone who is thinking about Academic Upgrading: “Do it! It’s worth it!”  
—*Kathy Keenan*



Hayley, Niagara College Upgrading

