Ben Rafoth discusses the benefits of a college campus writing center in his book chapter, “Why Visit Your Campus Writing Center” (2010). He begins by discussing how writing really is a social process and young writers crave having one on one contact with a person who will both praise and critique an essay. Rafoth explores how tutors and tutees develop relationships as they discuss writing assignments and problems. He used antidotal evidence with quotes from students and tutors to show how this relationship helped students improve their writing. In addition to the sense of community that develops in the writing center Rafoth also discusses how showing writing to a tutor gives students an additional sense of audience more than just sharing writing with a teacher for a grade. Rafoth also discusses why some students are reluctant to seek help citing writing anxiety as one of the leading causes of anxiety over using a public toilet or going to a party. Rafoth says, “For many people, the hardest part is showing their writing to someone else.” When I think about my experience in the writing center this quote perhaps sums up my experience more than any other.

I had worked as a tutor in the writing center long before I ever became a tutee. I think this made it extra difficult to seek help when I became inevitable that I would not pass if I did not. It was my senior year of college and I was taking a linguistic class. Linguistics is a science based activity even though I deals with language, and I always have to work a little harder to use that logical analytical part of my brain. My instructor was the mean grouchy old man who sometimes threw things at students and often cussed at them. On top of all this, I was dealing with the loss of my dad and struggled with grief that manifested in lack of ability to concentrate. However, more than anything I wanted to do well in this class. I wanted to graduate with honors and knew the only way I could do so was to get at least a B. Paper after paper came back with an F or D. Day after day I left class in tears. I spoke to the writing center director to see if tutoring was a possibility. She said, yes just let her know. I didn’t let her know and watched my grade continue to slip until I had to face the truth. There was no way I was going to accomplish my goal if I didn’t ask for help.

I really had to swallow my pride to seek that help. Rafoth writes, “For a few students, visiting a writing center feels like admitting they are not good enough to be in the course they’re taking.” As a tutor and someone who had been a successful student in the past it was especially difficult for me to ask for help. However, I found that my tutor never seemed to judge me. We have remained friends, even now years later. I sometimes wonder if he only remembers me from the classes we took together or from being coworkers in the writing center or if he remember the times he patiently showed me different ways to looks at topics and how he would help me spot mistakes that I had previously missed. However he remember me matters less and less as the years have passed. What matters is that I passed the class with a B, I graduated with honors, and I learned that sometimes a person has to swallow her pride in order to accomplish a goal.

Rafoth concludes by says, “Learning to write is not a uniformly warm fuzzy experience, but it can lead to some of the best encounters you will have in school—with tutors in the writing center who are there just to help.” For me learning to write was sometimes a warm fuzzy experience. It was often something I did better than many of my classmates. But when writing became difficult it was the writing center that turned in into one of the best encounters I had in school.