

The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?

Personal statement 2 (grammar checked)

Here I was, my blood was running cold; I felt as if I could barely breathe...

I was a senior in one of the most prestigious high schools in Niger, but when I received a letter of admission to the United World College program, I knew the UWC mission was one to which I could dedicate my life. The excitement of embracing a new adventure and the melancholy of leaving my family and friends were conflicting.

Simultaneously, COVID struck so I wasn't granted my visa to come to the US. I had to study from my home in Niger for my first semester. I lived outside of Niamey and my internet connection was nearly nonexistent, forcing me to move among my different cousins' houses in order to have a 550ko/s internet connection. I was desperate, powerless, and tired, as the time difference had me in class until one AM. Between assignments and deadlines, I found myself sleeping three to four hours per night.

Studying online had an advantage: I could read the subtitles on my glitchy screen and I never had to talk.

As Covid restrictions relaxed, I finally made it to campus in the US. An extrovert at home, I now became introverted and shy; I couldn't express my ideas. Many times during my Economics and Environmental Systems and Societies classes, my teachers asked me questions I couldn't respond to. I knew the answers, but I could never find the words. It felt as if I could barely breathe. If you hooked me up to a heart monitor, I might have broken the machine. So, I did the only thing I could have done. I said hopelessly, "I don't know". In my room, alone, after those events, I felt tears running down my cheeks.

This language barrier was hiding everything else about me. For my peers and teachers, I was the guy with a wide and contagious smile. My passions, my daily activities, and my relationships defined who I was and who I'd become. I was much more than just those labels. I love statistics, know how to code, won speech competitions in French, edited commercial videos for money, and loved watching Moana every week...

After a few weeks of feeling dejected and misunderstood, I decided to always speak at least once in every class to increase my confidence. Unsurprisingly, it didn't work out the first few weeks. But, as I kept trying to make my mistakes freely, my confidence increased. Being interested in my surrounding environment, I joined the permaculture ExEd which forced me to talk more and reach for new friendships.

With my roommate, we created *The Reading Contest*. In a month and a half, we wanted to see who could read the most words. My enthusiasm made me follow the Jim Kwik course on speed reading, increasing my WPM from 216 to 549. I read 7 books in that time. From *The Thing Around my Neck*, by Chimamanda Adichie to *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, by Maya Angelou to, *The Power of Habits*, by Charles Duhigg, my personal favorite.

I could've read picture books or easier novels, but I never considered taking the easy way out. I discovered I love reading. Ever since, in my free time, I've been sneaking into the library, learning how the books are classified, and flipping pages.

In no time, everything changed: my concentration, grades (I had the highest grade in the class on the last physics exam), and vocabulary. Moreover, my co-years elected me as a community-building Residential Advisor.

No longer paralyzed sharing my thoughts, I become more comfortable with myself... I became vulnerable in the sense that I had to admit my weaknesses and let my trusted entourage help me. I know that learning is a process, so now I leave my comfort zone and try new experiences.