**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?**

Exhausted, I felt like giving up and “accidentally” disconnecting my Internet connection. Somehow, I had managed to lose my first two debates, despite having had motions that seemed to be in my favor. My teammates and I were desperate to win this last debate, but at the same time, morale was at a record low.

I held my breath, anticipating the final motion. “This House regrets the popular saying that *“semua orang punya rezekinya masing-masing*,” the motion read. *Everyone has their own fortunes.* My heart dropped. The scope of this motion was so narrow that attempting to build a case supporting it was like squeezing droplets of juice out of a dry apple.

Most of the motions I had previously debated featured broader scopes, which made it easier to argue in my speech. To show the significance of this motion, I had to broaden its narrow scope. This was tedious because how could this saying, usually only applied to smaller areas of life, be applied to larger situations and aspects? My team and I were stuck for a good ten minutes. As time ticked, the pressure to build our case exponentially increased. The pressure, along with the difficulty of dissecting this motion, deteriorated not just my mindset, but my team’s entire mindset going into this debate. With the right mindset, building arguments was already enough of a problem, but our pessimism was ultimately what failed us. With not much to work with, I was unable to squeeze in a full seven-minute speech. The sheer brainpower needed to think of a single coherent argument required my entire team and me to have laser-sharp focus, and laser-sharp focus we did not have.

After the debate ended, my team and I realized that our biggest mistake was staying in that pessimistic state. The substantial amount of effort we put into discussing this motion together ended up with a weak case for our side, and combined with the discouragement from our previous rounds, we were unable to get back on our feet.

While this experience stung, I learned that, during case-building, the gears in my brain must continuously turn. The most effective way to case-build, especially with “unique” motions like this one, was to make sure new ideas, no matter how small they were, kept coming. New ideas could later join together to form one big idea like a jigsaw puzzle, or be built upon. The flow of communication between my teammates and me needed to be consistent, allowing for new arguments to be brought to the table every minute. This strategy has proven to be successful in subsequent debate competitions; even with difficult motions, I was still able to produce speeches longer than seven minutes.

Through that bitter experience, I learned how to sort out my priorities to make sure I was focused on the task at hand. I knew the top priorityasWhile it is indeed important to learn from setbacks, mulling over them too much will only cause me to become slower and discouraged at completing my responsibilities. Finding that balance between looking back at past mistakes and focusing towards the present has certainly resulted in a positive shift in mindset while doing any sort of work, and all that was thanks to that one debate.