**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?**

“Just start eating” was one of the hardest phrases to hear when I had anorexia nervosa. As I was relentlessly poked fun at for being chubby and overweight by my family, I fell into a spiral of isolation and developed a hate for food. For six months, I would hear the constant sound of a single mango being peeled—my meal every day. My struggle with anorexia began when I stopped eating rice and drinking soda since I felt as though it added unnecessary calories to my meals. Over time, it accumulated to not having breakfast and dinner, and over the course of 2 months, it lead up to not eating on most days. I became severely underweight and despite the words of encouragement my friends and family gave, it was never enough to outweigh my hate for food. Until one day, my aunt said, “I’ll eat this meal if you eat this cookie”.

Those words helped tremendously with my recovery. From eating the cookie, I remembered what it felt like to not be limited to one fruit every day. Soon after, my aunt started to educate me about food. She taught me to not view food as calories, but as essentials my body requires for growth. She sent me food with letters explaining why I should eat the food every day without fail. “Salmon is rich in protein and is full of keratin!” was written in the very first letter I read. Upon first glance, I felt motivated to eat the salmon, since she mentioned it was full of keratin, as my hair was falling out due to lack of nutrients. Though it was a process, it wasn’t always linear, as oftentimes I fall back into the same pattern after stepping on a scale and seeing an increase in my weight. As I continued on, I began to add more food to my plate, starting with baked salmon, to eventually eating rice and pork. In time, I came to the realization that it’s not about avoiding food, but knowing and understanding what your body needs. I learned that the way of educating people is crucial, as recovery for me, was not as simple as finding a problem and a solution. For me, recovery mirrors education—it isn’t always a direct path. There will always be challenges along the way where you fall, but with the right approach, you will be able to succeed.

Days after my recovery felt liberating and I started to perceive education in a different light. I wondered whether I can help promote education to be more interesting, the same way my aunt helped me by presenting specific instances relating to me for me to see the benefit of eating. In realizing this, I searched for opportunities to provide free education in Indonesia available to different groups of people, which is the reason I started my organization, Komunitas Pelajar Mengabdi Bangsa (KOMIB). I had the opportunity to visit Sekolah Daarul Qolam in Bandung to teach about the environment to middle school students, seeing as how Indonesia is ranked the second worst country regarding plastic pollution, as I believe that the way we learn is affected by our surroundings. On top of the lesson I gave, I also incorporated activities such as giving the students gifts in exchange for collecting plastic waste in the classroom and disposing of it properly, as it was clear that the classroom was filled with plastic bottles and candy wrappers. I was overjoyed to see the smiles on the students’ faces as they yelled, “Wow! I never realized our class was so spacious!”, as I realized my purpose in doing this- to help others learn in a unique way, refining education in Indonesia. However, education does not stop after a lesson. Following the lesson, we invited the schools we teach to KOMIB Fair- an event where we collaborated with the Indonesian government to provide students with a broader range of knowledge—knowledge that otherwise wouldn’t be provided in schools, such as a talk show with the governor of Indonesia, or even a way to produce paper out of corn husks. At the fair, we incorporated the lesson we taught about the environment to the students, as they were able to bring the trash they collected from their houses in exchange for money, and as a result, the large waste box was filled to the brim with plastic waste, highlighting the enthusiasm the students felt. Education has to be approached in a way where students’ knowledge is built and supported through different opportunities provided to them where they can apply what they learn and see the changes they are capable of making, in order for them to be motivated.

My aunt’s persistence and selflessness in approaching and educating me on understanding anorexia and recovery made me aware of different approaches to education.

For me, my organization is a reflection of my journey as a person, and I believe that the growth I have shown as a result of my hardship is able to help me overcome future obstacles. I realized the importance of having a multifaceted perspective and approach, as hardships are oftentimes not one-dimensional. I have also learned the importance of communication and relating to others’ conditions.

Word Count: 882

Hi Kaelyn,

Thank you so much for sharing your recovery journey! Your journey kept me engaged and curious to find out more about what comes after.

However, I think you will need to cut down parts of your third paragraph. It’s awesome what you did with KOMIB. But I think you should focus on one or two things you did through the organization and link it back to your own story and goal.

Another thing that you should consider is to try and avoid writing long sentences. There were quite a lot of sentences which you could’ve split into two or more sentences. This would also be easier for you to cut down your words later on.

I hope that helps and best of wishes with your application!

Kind regards,

Johana