**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 6 months, I would hear the constant sound of a single mango being peeled- my meal every day. 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, for my body to grow. In doing this, 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, especially 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 my path of recovery, every time someone told me “You look healthier”, I grew more hopeful, and the times between my relapse grew and grew until I didn’t relapse anymore. From my recovery, 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, and there will always be challenges along the way where you fall, but with the right approach, you will be able to succeed.

The days after my recovery felt very liberating and I started to perceive education in a different light. I wondered whether I can help promote education, making it more interesting, just how my aunt helped me recover by finding specific instances relating to me for me to see the benefit of eating. In realizing this, I find opportunities to take part in providing free education in Indonesia, making it widely available to any group of people, which is the reason I started my organization, Komunitas Pelajar Mengabdi Bangsa, or in short, KOMIB. I had the opportunity to visit Sekolah Daarul Qolam in Bandung, to teach about the environment to middle school students. 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 in 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, as I was able to realize the importance of having a multifaceted perspective and approach, as hardships are oftentimes not one-dimensional. Through my hardships, I have also learned the importance of communication and relating to others’ conditions.

Note:

Hi Kaelyn! I thoroughly enjoyed reading your journey with eating disorder, and I am very glad that you have emerged victorious with the help of your aunt’s unique approach. Moreover, you’re able to start an impactful organization and have a vision for Indonesia’s education, which are all great qualities from a university candidate. To make your essay even stronger, I personally think it’d be better if you can focus more on your experience with eating disorder and how you felt during that particular challenge. You can also elaborate more on your recovery and the progress of you’ve changed your perception about food (this will be the climax). Since your particular interest is in the environmental education, I think it’d help if the essay can give a connection between this area and your experience (most readers might expect to read more about health education based on your personal experience).

Best wishes,

Melinda (All-in Eduspace Editor)