**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?**

Tie, check. Vest, check. Hair, check.

Here I was, in front of the bathroom mirror tidying up my appearance to disguise my dishevelled mind. My strides were getting slower as I was nearer to the meeting room. Despite having numerous thoughts hanging in my mind, I managed to put on a smile and greeted each and every member of the student council. It was just a week before ACSW, short for Art, Charity, and Sports Week. As a president of the student council, I was in charge of the tenants for the bazaar. Every department head was presenting their progress, but my eyes were glued to my phone waiting for a notification. The tenant, who had planned to open a stand in the bazaar, had been unreachable for days. I was about to talk about this in the meeting, but my mind restrained me from doing so since I knew others were also busy preparing the parts they were in charge of.

Days went by and the tenant still could not be contacted. I was getting frustrated as there were only 3 days away, so it would be hard to make a deal with another tenant. Noticing the frustration on my face, my mentor, who is also a youth leader at my church, came up to check on me. At first, I was reluctant because I assumed he would not understand the situation and think that it was just a minor issue. I guess he knew that I was reluctant, so he started by telling his journey on leading the youth ministry at church as well as the struggles he faced. As soon as he finished his story, I felt understood and the story about the struggles I was dealing with just naturally came out of my mouth. After I finished telling my story, I was expecting to be given paragraphs of advice or tips and tricks. However, his response caught me off guard, “A leader should be HOT: Humble, Open, and Transparent.”

What a frivolous abbreviation! I immediately texted the student council to set off a meeting, where I decided to be open about my struggle with the tenant. Fortunately, one of the department heads told me that her relative just opened a beverage franchise near our school and was looking for an opportunity to join the bazaar. Without thinking twice, I asked for her relative’s contact and as expected, they were willing to open a stand in the bazaar. Overall, the bazaar was successful, the tenant specifically was in great demand as they sold more than 60 cups of Thai milk tea and green tea.

I realized how important it is to have a mentor or simply a person to talk to when you are struggling. This inspired me to pioneer ICC Youth I-Click, a fellowship group with an aim of creating a safe place for youth to be genuine and vulnerable. I fully understand that people might initially feel reluctant or uncomfortable to talk about their stories and struggles, but from my experience I learned that I can try to make them be more open by beginning to tell my stories that would probably relate to theirs.  I also learned that sometimes people do not need lengthy pieces of advice, they rather just need to be listened to.

Hi Steffi:

Your overall experience here is no doubt valuable!

It’s great that you learned many lessons through encounter with your mentor/youth leader and went on to found your own support group. However, as the reader I would want to see more detail, depth, and emotions in your story of finding a tenant for your school event. I think currently the highlight is more on what you learned and how you resolved the issue.

Structure wise, you can put more weight in the story of your challenge and how significant it was. I would summarize and shorten the story of your youth leader.

As a whole though, I think your story is very inspiring and solid.

All the best!