**Prompt 8: Beyond what has already been shared in your application, what do you believe makes you stand out as a strong candidate for admissions to the University of California?**

Step out of your comfort zone. At first glance, this may look like some simple phrase, but the idea of doing this dreads us.

The comfort zone is a straightforward place where our lives feel comfortable and completely serene. But what exactly happens when we just step outside?

When my teacher offered me to interview Edgar Xavier Marvelo, a three-time wushu world champion as well as a medalist at the Asian Games and Southeast Asian Games, I was over the moon. As this was my first official interview, I went through numerous articles online to learn proper techniques to conduct an interview from my tone, hand gestures and even facial expressions. Practising my lines in front of the mirror, it seemed that I looked at my face more than I ever did in my whole life.

When the interview day came, it was this moment I felt reality actually hit me. I was a nervous wreck – terrified that I’ll keep on mumbling, stumbling my words or even messing up this interview and embarrassing myself.

‘Ding, Edgar has entered the meeting’.

I told myself, "Okay, just calm down and act normal. There’s no backing out now." Firstly, I initiated small talks in order to ease the tension, and by the time the interview was about to begin, it just felt like a regular conversation with a friend. In fact, I felt confident enough to go out of my script and improvised some questions on the spot based on his answer. For example, when he said “wushu is more than just a sport, it's a way of life”, I followed it by asking if there were any quotes that helped him set up this mindset. The interview was a success as everything went by smoothly and I even received a ‘well-done’ message from a couple of my teachers afterwards.

This experience was the opening step for me to be more confident in myself and more importantly in my public speaking skills. It has allowed my introverted self to step out of my comfort zone, attempt new things and take bigger risks in life.

Leaving your comfort zone can be associated with riding a roller coaster. At first, you’re scared. Along the ride, you’re screaming. But at the end of it, you realised that you're actually having fun and all those were happy screams. Basically, living life to the fullest.

Hi Victoria:

Your experience is definitely worth sharing.

I would suggest focusing on the struggles of your experience, what you learned, and how it impacted you. Since the prompt is more or less open-ended, I would suggest highlighting what makes you different from that experience.

Are there any uncommon values or traits or lessons you learned that can set you apart from other applicants? How has this experience shaped your identity? What do you have to offer as a candidate?

Your story does show how you have grown through this experience, however as a reader I feel like it does not yet give an edge that shows how unique you are. Don’t be afraid to show your deepest thoughts and quirks. Be you! :)

All the best.