**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 simply felt like giving up and “accidentally” disconnecting my Internet connection. I had lost my first two debates and my morale to finish off my last debate was nearing zero. The stress that online debate competitions put on me was honestly almost the same as that of actual in-person debates. Winning debates filled me with an intense drive to win my next few debates while losing drained me. Somehow, I had managed to lose the debates with motions that seemed to be in my side’s favor. My teammates and I were desperate to win this last debate, but at the same time, we felt demotivated to even join this last debate because of our previous losses. I held my breath, anticipating this final motion. “This House regrets the popular saying that *“semua orang punya rezekinya masing-masing*'', the motion read. For context, the Indonesian phrase in that motion directly translates to “everyone has their own fortunes”. 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 other motions I have previously debated featured broader scopes, which made it easier to explain their significance 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, which is usually only applied to smaller areas of life, be applied to larger situations and aspects? This question caused me and my team to be stuck at a roadblock 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 the pessimistic mindset that my teammates and I had the entire debate was ultimately our killer. After debriefing 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.

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With not much to work with, I was unluckily unable to squeeze in a full seven-minute speech. The sheer mind power needed to think of a single argument that was coherent required my entire team and me to have laser-sharp focus. While this experience stung, the lessons I learned enhanced my creative thinking and productivity. 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 emerging. New ideas could always either join together to form one big idea, like a jigsaw puzzle, or be built upon. The flow of communication between my teammates and me was consistent, allowing for new arguments to be brought to the table every minute. This strategy has proven successful in debate competitions I joined after this one; even with difficult motions, I was still able to produce speeches longer than seven minutes. Rather than dwelling on losses, my mind was geared towards building a solid case first and making sure my team was constantly communicating. Through that bitter experience, I learned how to sort out my priorities to make sure I was focused with the task at hand. While 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 and future has certainly resulted in a positive shift in mindset while doing any sort of work, and all that was thanks to that one debate.