**Prompt #5**

***Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.***

I had never really liked bracelets and thought that that would never change. The constant rubbing and movement of it left an unpleasant feeling on my wrist. I thought I'd never wear one again until earlier this year.

A slim black thread with beads strung along it like a rosary was wrapped around my wrist as I walked along the school corridors heading to my class. It was a gift from Jocelyn. Despite the kindness, I was still itching to take it off. Minutes felt like hours with the bracelet.

“I’ll take it off when she's not around, ” I said to myself.

I’d always had this mental barrier against bracelets ever since I was a kid. This same phenomenon seemed to pervade other parts of my life. I was often hesitant to leap into uncomfortable activities or foreign environments, afraid I wasn’t up for it. I found myself avoiding socializing with people/relatives I don't recognize during large family gatherings. During my first year in the student council, I’d procrastinate over my duties and often say “No” or “I’m busy” to requests since I didn't want to add more responsibilities onto my plate due to fear of not meeting their expectations. This sometimes leads to problems in management and I end up burdening the person in charge.

As the day drew closer to an end, I found myself in my room gazing upon the ever-growing collection of awards I’ve accumulated over the years. There was one that stood out in particular, the trophy for winning first place in the Chinese Drama Competition during 6th grade. I was signed up for the competition by my parents against my will. But thinking back, I wouldn’t have been able to accomplish this in the first place if it wasn’t for my parents forcing me to join. As I reached out for the trophy on top of the shelf, I noticed a black figure on my arm in my peripheral vision. To my surprise, the bracelet was resting comfortably around my wrist. I realized that if I wasn’t pushing myself out of my comfort zone, I wouldn’t have been able to improve and recognize my own capabilities. This was evident in the instance of joining the competition and wearing the bracelet. From that moment on, I promised myself that I would not back down from my future endeavors no matter how challenging or scary they may seem.

Being true to my promise, I participated in a hackathon with a team of 4 for the very first time that year. The hackathon required its participants to develop an application that provided a solution to a global problem of their choice and a business plan for pitching, all in just a day. Despite knowing I had close to zero experience in app development, let alone in pitching, I registered anyway. I didn’t want to succumb to my fear of failure and embarrassment and let this opportunity go away. With only a few days till D-Day, I studied as much as I possibly could and, to my surprise, placed second.

These seemingly small changes in my head changed how I approach my difficulties and opportunities. I was able to try out lots of new activities, take on new responsibilities, and did an internship. I stopped merely thinking about doing things and instead, learned not to be afraid, to take the first step, to seize the day.

The bracelet, which initially felt like a shackle both physically and mentally, had now become proof and a constant reminder to me that my limitation – it was only my imagination.

Throughout my time in college and beyond, there's no doubt that I’ll be faced with various challenges, from participating in lab research to hosting community events and working on my own start-up. Instead of worrying, I’ll face them head-on and keep moving forward. I’ll wear the bracelet.