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

As I woke up in the morning, I looked in the mirror magically hoping for a change, yet nothing happened, and I was greeted with the same emotion I felt every morning : a feeling of shame. I was tired of always being known as the “chubby” kid, but even more than that I was becoming increasingly aware that my lifestyle was not sustainable and that it was negatively impacting my health. Simple things like a jog or a light workout would be enough to leave me breathless. At the end of my junior year, I promised myself to try and switch to a healthier lifestyle. Although the entire process of my weight loss might seem insignificant in the grand scheme of things, this process deeply impacted my mentality. In the past, my image of myself was a result of the way others viewed me. If people labeled me as the “chubby” and unhealthy kid then, I would think of myself as the chubby and unhealthy kid. This mindset prevented me from growing because it made me believe that these titles were already part of my identity and that there was nothing I could do to change it.

During my summer break, I took my promise seriously and had that feeling of shame etched in my mind which enabled me to follow a strict diet despite the mouthwatering food that is always somehow available in every Indonesian household. More specifically, I was able to keep myself accountable by keeping a schedule and by making a diet plan. In addition, after my break started, my sister invited me to work out in the gym and soon after, I made this part of my routine and started to head to the gym everyday. Even though there were numerous moments where I felt like giving up, that feeling of shame I felt every morning allowed me to keep going.

My weight loss experience has shown me that I don’t have to stick to any of the labels that are put on me and that I am instead capable of deciding who I want to be if I put in the effort.  My weight went down by over twenty kilograms and I was feeling healthier and more confident than I had ever been in years. I was finally able to go for a simple job or light workout without worrying about running out of breath. I was finally able to gain the confidence to try-out for the school soccer team. I was finally able to become a part of the school varsity soccer team. I was finally becoming more and more who I wanted to be. The new perspective on life that came as a result of my weight loss journey quickly spread to other aspects of my life. I was previously known by many people in school as a rather quiet person who was not the type to take on a leadership position, but I was able to change this perception of myself by becoming the CFO for the school shop and participating in various communities such as the drama community as well as the sports community. Now, when I look at the mirror I no longer feel a feeling of shame; instead, I feel motivated since I know that I can become a better version of myself as long as I put in the effort.