**Prompt 5 - Describe the most significant challenge you have faced and the steps you have taken to overcome this challenge. How has this challenge affected your academic achievement?**

One of the darkest times I’d ever faced was in fourth grade. My mom was diagnosed with cancer and had to be treated overseas. I felt as if the pillar supporting my family crumbled. Since she left, I had to fill in the role of my parents in taking care of the family. It was overwhelming to say the least. Studying, tutoring my siblings, keeping the house tidy, and making sure we ate healthy meals - all of these began chipping away at my body and soul.

Lethargy became an everyday occurrence, which was apparent at school. One of the teachers reached out to me; that became my wake up call.

“I need to balance my studies and my responsibilities at home!”

The first step was the hardest: the change of mindset from an immature, unorganized child to a person with day-to-day goals.

The second step was setting up a strict schedule for myself. It was a packed schedule from going back home from school to 10 pm, not willing to waste a single minute. I would constantly check the clock and ensure that my schedule is on track, thus, preventing me from procrastinating my school and home responsibilities.

To ensure that I could stick to my schedule, I learned self discipline. There were times when I was tempted to just forget everything since being the backbone of my family at that age was more than I could take. However, I resolved to my mission by creating my own reward system: I’d give myself a one hour free time for finishing every five tasks. At the end of each day, I’d reflect on myself. If I felt that I slacked off that day, I’d remove my reward for the day. This system taught me to be critical of myself and pushed me out of my immaturity.

The power of the mind is truly astonishing. With just a change in mindset, I became more eager to change and became stricter with myself, which allowed me to learn and manage my time properly and efficiently. A gradual increase in marks was also encouraging to continue this process.

Hi David,

What I like the most from your essay is that you’ve made **the challenge** part very clear. You’ve also attempted to tie your family circumstance to your decline in academic performance at school, which is good.

However, I feel like you can definitely benefit from more elaboration. Additionally, be more explicit about your performance at school and the steps you’ve taken to overcome your specific challenge. I have left some comments and questions above to help you elaborate on the details.

Make sure to describe the changes in your schedule after your resolution and the visible result (grades/subjects, and so on) in your academic achievement after becoming a disciplined person.

All of these details are necessary so that the admissions officers can see your values: family, discipline, hard work, responsibility, and so on.