“And the winner goes to…” a reoccurring sentence I heard throughout my childhood. My heart pounding with nervous excitement as I wait for the results. I had poured my heart and soul into preparing for this singing competition, wanting to be the best. But, it was never my name who’d complete the sentence, it’s someone else’s.

Throughout my childhood I had joined multiple singing competitions believing that I could win, I was confident with my skills especially with the support from the people around me. But my name was never called and it was always those who can reach those high notes that would get called to come up on stage and receive the award.

In every competition I joined, I was always the odd one out. Others would sing ballad songs with riffs and runs while I was singing jazz songs with barely any high notes. My parents would always say, “It’s fine, you’re different from them, you don’t need to be like them.” to cheer me up but it still did impacted me.

Losing multiple competitions made me doubt myself and my ability. I was adamant that no one would enjoy my songs and voice as those judges didn’t like mine. I grew up thinking that I can never pursue my childhood dream in wanting to create music that brings people joy. I thought from the judgement of those judges that I’m unworthy and I’m incapable of becoming something more. Those results clouded my decision to the point that I stopped trying with my singing career.

When I was 14, everything changed. The constant doubt and lack of self confidence was eating me up day by day. It was a long realisation that I couldn’t let some judgement stop me from doing something I enjoy. I noticed that I could do so much more without entering competitions. That's when I completely stopped joining competitions and did song covers and created songs instead. My choices did do me justice as I managed to do much more than I was when I entered competitions.

When I created my first song, my friends were telling me how much they liked my song and how it had such an inspirational meaning to them. I then noticed that I could help and do so much without having to join competitions. I noticed that I joined the competition merely for validation and appreciation. But I now find that I could help and inspire others from another way that doesn’t involve those judgments. The validation and appreciation that I once craved now changed into a goal in showing my feelings creatively while being able to inspire and help others.

It was never about the awards; it was about how I wanted my message to be heard. It was never about my own sake, but it was about my dream of inspiring others. I know I am now slowly in that step, slowly but surely I’m trying to inspire others from my songs. The end of the sentence that once meant everything now meant nothing especially after seeing how much my little actions could change a part in someone’s life whether it’s big or small.

Hi Carol,

Though you haven’t specified which prompt this essay is for yet, I feel your story would work perfectly with either prompt no 2 (The lessons we take from…) or prompt no 5 (Discuss…that sparked personal growth).

I’ve also divided your essay into paragraphs to highlight your evolving mental and emotional state and singing/composing journey.

I think you’ve touched on the most important aspects of what makes an effective essay – well done! However, I do think that your essay has the potential to become even better. You can read the specific side comments I’ve left above. By providing more meticulous depiction, you can enable your readers to empathize with your experience, as we have all encountered failure and understand the challenge of overcoming it.

Invite us readers to step into your anxiety and disappointment, so we can immerse ourselves in the situation. This technique magnifies your accomplishments, particularly when you’ve later successfully created songs that are relatable to your friends. Rather than merely stating the act of speaking before the board, you should write by showing us how your songs helped your friends to highlight the significance of inspiring others through your song writing.

Best of luck!

Melinda