**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? (350 words)**

Halfway through grade 8, I was diagnosed with idiopathic scoliosis. The term idiopathic means that the cause of this condition is unknown. With the rate at which my scoliosis is progressing, I would be required to wear a hard, plastic back brace for 22 hours a day. It didn’t matter if I was eating or sleeping. I still had to wear it.

This device significantly restricted my ability to run and walk, and I felt miserable because I felt trapped. Being forced to wear this device emotionally exhausted me to no end, because I felt like every remaining freedom I had left perished. I felt as if unfortunate events kept on occurring in my life for no good reason, and I grew to believe that my life has become meaningless. This all changed when I discovered a 5 minute TED-ED video on Stoicism.

Stoicism taught me that the series of events that led me to be forced to wear my back brace is beyond my control, but I can alter how I see my back brace. With Stoicism, I began to see my back brace as something that helps my back instead of something that’s restricting my activity. With this clarity of mind, I began to take up hobbies I initially gave up on due to feelings of hopelessness, one of the most prominent being debate.

This led me to participate in Model United Nations, a competition where students represent a country to propose solutions to global problems. This served as an extension to the debate skills I had gotten from other debate competitions. As I became more familiar with the strategies needed to win in an MUN competition, I started to rack up more awards as a delegate. Earlier this year, I signed up to be one of the organizers of my school’s chapter of MUN. It allowed me to see MUN from the perspective of an organizer, and not as a delegate. This new activity of mine has given my life more meaning, as I feel like I am capable of turning my life around in the face of adversity.

Hi Qimiwa:

I’m sure it was not easy navigating your academics with a physical challenge. What you did despite and because of your challenge is no small feat!

My comments as per above have to do with connecting your challenge and how it affected your achievement. Structurally I think there’s not much you need to alter, but adding those details I mentioned would help the reader get a clearer sense of how your situation correlates with your achievement.

The conclusion is also important. I would make sure to go back and relate how your challenge brought you to that achievement and what it taught you.

All the best!