Imagine as you ascend up the air, entrusting your life with only a fire above you as the cold wind blows upon your face and the heat glaring on your body. Imagine the terrifying realization that if the fire went out, you will fall to your death. But then look at the view, the beautiful orange canyons of CappaDocia, with the shining sunrise, the orangish blue sky, with other hot air balloons levitating in the air. It felt unreal, it was breathtaking. All those fears were gone. That was how I felt when I rode a hot air balloon in CappaDocia for the first time.

I used to be thin until the COVID-19 pandemic hit. During the pandemic, I became lazy. Then I became fat since I lacked exercising and ate a lot. I became to be very unhappy with my body, and I was very insecure about it. Every time someone commented about my body, I feel quite embarrassed. I have always wanted to do something about it, but I didn’t see a chance.

I realized that I need to improve my body, and normal exercises weren’t going to cut it. I realized that I needed to go to the gym. However, at the time, I did not know anything about the gym. All I know about them is just strong people lifting dumbbells. I also felt that the gym was very intimidating, and as an introvert, I did not feel comfortable going to such a place. However, I hatched up a plan. I needed to be as fat as possible before I started going to the gym. I remembered that my school offered fitness club CCA. Once students are able to enter school again for the new school year, I took the opportunity came to join fitness club CCA.

It was my first time going to a gym of some sorts, so I was completely bewildered at all the machines in the gym. Wednesday came in, and it was the first day of fitness club CCA. I felt quite uncomfortable at first because it was quite a lot of people who joined. But of course, there were friends from my grade such as Kievi and Fadhil who are fitness club CCA vice captains, as well as other people. So, I did not feel as nervous as compared if I joined a real gym. The first day was all about leg day. Kievi was my instructor, and he guided me along with other people to do leg workouts such as squats and Bulgarian squats. I was sweating all over. At the end of the day, I was extremely tired, but I realized in order to achieve my goals, I should step over my comfort zone, try something new and commit to it. And so I did. Every Wednesday, I joined fitness club CCA. I always consulted with Fadhil and Kievi about anything fitness related, such as the minimum amount of times to work out in a week, how to do the workouts, what are supplementary substances such as creatine, diet and so on.

As I got more comfortable with the gym, I finally tried going to a real gym out. I went to Celebrity Fitness with my sister. For the first month, I have a personal trainer training me to do many workouts. After a month of gymming with a personal trainer, I gymmed alone every weekend both Saturday and Sunday, as well as in school on Wednesday. Thus, I gymmed 3 times a week. I was forced to enjoy the pain to see muscle gains. I kept reminding myself of what I came to the gym for, which was to get rid of my body insecurities, look good and to get rid of my perceived nerdy image. Finally, after a few months of working out, my body looked a lot better. I lost approximately 5kg of fat and gained some more muscle. My friends even complimented me about my body, and my body insecurities were finally gone. Even though I am still not as strong compared to my other friends, my body at least looked better than before. I finally gained a bit more confidence, and starting liking how I looked. Just like the hot air balloon,

I learned that you should always step out of your comfort zone in order to learn new things, and always learn from someone who has experience. I have always wanted to take up mechanical engineering. While Maths and Physics is difficult for me, I still step out of my comfort zone by pursuing mechanical engineering. From this experience, I will make sure to always consult my friends and professors about this subject. I will also try out new activities in university.

Hi Aaron,

This is a good attempt for a first draft. You started off with an engaging hook, and your journey of self-improvement through breaking out of your comfort zone is one many people can relate to. I have a few suggestions on how you can improve your content further, as laid out below.

**First**, to really convince the reader that you’ve grown and learned valuable lessons, I suggest describing more of the *obstacles* you faced as you went through your journey. What made you so reluctant to step out of your comfort zone in the beginning?

You may even draw parallels between your story on the hot air balloon and your workout journey. Were there any fears you faced while working out that were *similar* to the fear of falling once you got on the balloon? Was the end result of the workout as valuable as the breathtaking view you saw in the air?

**Second**, much like you did in your first paragraph, I suggest adding more description to the rest of your story. *Show*, not *tell*. Instead of telling the reader that you forced yourself to “enjoy the pain to see muscle gains”, show the reader what pains you went through, and what results you observed. Let the reader see through your eyes, and relate to your struggles.

**Lastly**, expand your conclusion more. You don’t have to mention your major of choice, but you can talk about how your experience will help you be a better student. How will it help you improve in other areas of your life too? Tell the reader how you plan to grow even *further*.

Overall, you’re on the right track so far. Keep it up!