**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?**

Going to college, I knew opening up to people would be one of my biggest challenges. I enjoyed being alone in my dorm room; it made me feel safe. However, I was unaware that I’d impeded myself from opportunities to connect with people. I learned that sense of belonging through having a community was crucial, yet scarce in my world.

I wanted to change, and I had to do it the right way. I joined intramural soccer with the hopes that it would allow me to socialize with people of similar interests. Yet, the relationships I made were not exactly what I was looking for.

As I analyzed my “friend-making” approach, I realized that I lack genuinity: I’d laugh too hard at someone’s jokes or I’d beat myself up if someone ignored me even though I hadn’t been making eye contact. As much as I didn’t want to admit it, I also reflected on whether I’ve truly opened up with them or been too shy to express my true self. It was more likely the former, so I knew I had to try again.

Seeking opportunities on projects related to environmental sustainability, I joined an NGO. Determined to not repeat the past, I interacted with them more genuinely: I didn’t laugh too hard at someone's jokes, I made fewer excuses about wanting to “be alone” and would hang out with them after our meetings. These small changes have finally made me feel like my “loner” tendencies gradually found its closure.

I’m thankful to my half-baked connections with the intramural soccer people. I’m also equally thankful to my new connections in the NGO. It’s enabled me to re-think my approach in building a genuine relationship with people. As I became more social, I realized that relationships are a two way street. Once both sides open up and are comfortable enough to reveal their true self, authentic and long-lasting relationships happen.

Hi Ravi,

Thank you for your essay! You have a solid foundation here – your problem, journey, and ending is clear. I would just add a little filler explaining why you are interested in environmental sustainability and intramural soccer (social sports? Social justice? Etc) so the story flows more smoothly.

Adding more reflection throughout the story on how you felt and what was going through your mind at the time will also help the reader understand you better and want to root for you. Why did you find it hard to open up to people before? Had this affected your life pre-college? What made you finally decide to make new friends? How were you finally able to open up, and what did you reap from that?

The prompt of the essay also calls for academic achievements resulted from the challenge. Include if you have professional connections from these relationships or if your studying method has changed since you became more social. This can go at the end of the essay.

C.G. & Chiara