**The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?**

Tie, check. Vest, check. Hair, check.

Here I was, in front of the bathroom mirror tidying up my appearance to disguise my dishevelled mind. My strides were getting slower as I was nearer to the meeting room. Despite having numerous thoughts hanging in my mind, I managed to put on a smile and greeted each and every member of the student council. It was just a week before ACSW, short for Art, Charity, and Sports Week. As a president of the student council, I was in charge of the tenants for the bazaar. Every department head was presenting their progress, but my eyes were glued to my phone waiting for a notification. The tenant, who had planned to open a stand in the bazaar, had been unreachable for days. I was about to talk about this in the meeting, but my mind restrained me from doing so since I knew others were also busy preparing the parts they were in charge of.

Days went by and the tenant still could not be contacted. I was getting frustrated as there were only 3 days away, so it would be hard to make a deal with another tenant. Noticing the frustration on my face, my mentor, who is also a youth leader at my church, came up to check on me. At first, I was reluctant because I assumed he would not understand the situation and think that it was just a minor issue. I guess he knew that I was reluctant, so he started by telling his journey on leading the youth ministry at church as well as the struggles he faced. As soon as he finished his story, I felt understood and the story about the struggles I was dealing with just naturally came out of my mouth. After I finished telling my story, I was expecting to be given paragraphs of advice or tips and tricks. However, his response caught me off guard, “A leader should be HOT: Humble, Open, and Transparent.”

What a frivolous abbreviation! I immediately texted the student council to set off a meeting, where I decided to be open about my struggle with the tenant. Fortunately, one of the department heads told me that her relative just opened a beverage franchise near our school and was looking for an opportunity to join the bazaar. Without thinking twice, I asked for her relative’s contact and as expected, they were willing to open a stand in the bazaar. Overall, the bazaar was successful, the tenant specifically was in great demand as they sold more than 60 cups of Thai milk tea and green tea.

I realized how important it is to have a mentor or simply a person to talk to when you are struggling. This inspired me to pioneer ICC Youth I-Click, a fellowship group with an aim of creating a safe place for youth to be genuine and vulnerable. I fully understand that people might initially feel reluctant or uncomfortable to talk about their stories and struggles, but from my experience I learned that I can try to make them be more open by beginning to tell my stories that would probably relate to theirs.  I also learned that sometimes people do not need lengthy pieces of advice, they rather just need to be listened to.

*Hi Laurent:*

*Your overall experience here is no doubt valuable!*

*It’s great that you learned many lessons through encounter with your mentor/youth leader and went on to found your own support group. However, as the reader I would want to see more detail, depth, and emotions in your story of finding a tenant for your school event. I think currently the highlight is more on what you learned and how you resolved the issue.*

*Structure wise, you can put more weight in the story of your challenge and how significant it was. I would summarize and shorten the story of your youth leader.*

*As a whole though, I think your story is very inspiring and solid.*

*All the best!*