**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?**

Revision draft:

Exhausted, I simply felt like giving up and “accidentally” disconnecting my Internet connection. I had lost my first two debates and my morale to finish off my last debate was nearing zero. The stress that online debate competitions put on me was honestly almost the same as that of actual in-person debates. Winning debates filled me with such an intense drive to win my next few debates while losing slowly drained me. Somehow, I had managed to lose the debates with motions that seemed to be on my side’s favor. My teammates and I were desperate to win this last debate, but at the same time, we felt demotivated to even join this last debate because of our previous losses. I held my breath, anticipating this final motion. “This House regrets the popular saying that *“semua orang punya rezekinya masing-masing*'', the motion read. For context, the Indonesian phrase in that motion directly translates to “everyone has their own fortunes”. The scope of this motion was so small that attempting to build a case supporting it was like squeezing tiny droplets of juice out of an almost dry apple.

Most of the other motions I have previously debated on featured broader topics. Motions about social media use, for example, were easier to debate. By narrowing these extremely broad topics to narrower areas in life (ie. how social media use affects students), their significance could be shown throughout my case. To show the significance of this motion, I had to broaden its narrow scope. This was tedious because how could this saying, which is usually only applied to smaller areas of life, be applied to larger situations and aspects? This question, that hung in the air, was mind-boggling for my team. Considering different perspectives would be the default way to achieve this, but we were stuck at a roadblock for a good ten minutes. As time ticked, the pressure to build our case exponentially increased. The difficulty of the motion combined with the pressure to win at least one debate slowed down my thinking process, but I was finally able to come up with the generalization that this saying left people to rely solely on their destinies; this became the foundation of my team's case.

With not much to work with, I was unluckily unable to squeeze a full seven minute speech. The sheer mind power needed to think of a single argument that was coherent required my entire team and I to have laser-sharp focus. In the end, after debriefing with my teammates, I realized that mindset was the biggest killer during this entire debate. While building arguments was a significant problem, the pessimistic mindset I had about this motion demotivated me to ponder harder. During case-building, the gears in my brain must continuously turn; the most effective way to case-build, especially with “unique” motions like this one, was to make sure new ideas, no matter how small they were, kept emerging. New ideas could always either join together to form one big idea, like a jigsaw puzzle, or be built upon. The mindset I had inhibited my thinking process and only caused me to feel like giving up. Combined with the panic I felt for when I had to speak, the motion ultimately defeated me. While this experience stung, the lessons I learned enhanced my creative thinking and productivity. The flow of communication between my teammates and I was consistent, allowing for new arguments to be brought to the table every minute. This strategy has proven successful; even with difficult motions, I was still able to produce speeches longer than seven minutes. Having this “rhythm” of sorts where I continuously think of ideas helps me produce constant progress within my academic and non-academic work.

First draft:

Exhausted, I simply felt like giving up and “accidentally” disconnecting my home Internet connection. I had lost my first two debates and my morale to finish off my last debate was nearing zero. The stress that online debate competitions put on me was honestly almost the same as that of actual in-person debates. Winning debates filled me with such an intense drive to win my next few debates while losing slowly drained me. Somehow, I had managed to lose the debates with motions that seemed to be on my side’s favor. That’s the thing with Asian Parliamentary debates, however: the outcomes are almost always as unpredictable as the weather because of the incredible amount of details that the adjudicators must consider for scoring. However, I digress. My teammates and I were partly desperate to win this last debate, but at the same time, we felt demotivated to even join this last debate because of our previous losses. At this point, we were simply hoping for a motion that was debatable. I held my breath as I anticipated this final debate motion. “This House regrets the popular saying that “semua orang punya rezekinya masing-masing ``'', the motion read. For context, the Indonesian phrase in that motion directly translates to “everyone has their own fortunes”. While it seemed viable at first to debate this motion, my teammates and I then realized how small the scope of the motion was and how difficult it would be to formulate seven-minute arguments. Not only did this motion seem weird, it also only applied to daily life, so making connections to economics and politics with this motion would be virtually impossible. Attempting to build a case supporting this motion was like squeezing tiny droplets of juice out of an almost dry apple.

The biggest difference between this motion and most of the other motions I have previously debated on was that, in order to form arguments, I had to widen the scope of this motion. Most of the other motions I have previously debated on have featured broad and renowned topics; in order to build cases for or against these motions, all I had to do was narrow down the spectrum and figure out how said problem would affect various areas of life. I had to work the other way around with this motion; broadening its narrow scope would be the only way my team could form a solid case. Considering different perspectives would be the default way to achieve this, but we were stuck at a roadblock for a good ten minutes. As time ticked, the pressure to build our case exponentially increased. Thankfully, the amount of pressure was directly proportional to our casebuilding speed, and we were able to come up with the generalization that this saying left people to rely solely on their destinies; this was the base for most of the other arguments we made afterward.

With so little substance to work with, I was unluckily unable to squeeze a seven minute speech out of the arguments I had made. Later on, I realized how ironic it was that simple motions such as this one were some of the hardest to debate because they focus on such a narrow spectrum. Looking back at the slightly disorganized Google Document that my teammates and I shared during this debate, I realized how more constructive and longer my arguments would be if they had more depth. Even though this last debate was overwhelming for me, learning how to scrutinize this motion from various different angles did not go to any waste. While this motion was incredibly simple, it still bit me hard, but the skills I learned from it could go a long way.

Dear Evangeline,

Well done on your first draft! I really enjoy reading your essay, as I can relate to your debating experience with mine a while back haha. I am especially impressed with your use of descriptive techniques, which made your experience an interesting and engaging narrative to read. Your use of sensory details in the essay also kept me occupied.

However, as you can see from the comments I left above, I think you will need to provide better clarity as to what the actual challenge is for you. Was it the loss and you battling your desire to give up, or was it the challenging debate motion? Providing clarity in this area would help you in the following paragraphs to explain how the challenge has affected you and what you learned from it. Which I think was less of the focus of your essay.

I also think that you could explore what you learned from this experience by sharing how that encounter has shaped you today. How has it changed your mindset? Do you still go to other debate competitions? If so, how has that “failure” you experienced motivated you to do differently in the competitions you joined after that? Were you able to apply what you learned in other areas?

All the best with your essay and application!

Best wishes,

Johana

2nd comment from Sharon (25 Oct):

Eva, the point of the problem is clearer now, but you should reduce the length of the first and second paragraph (that focuses more on the debate and realization); look at the pointers below that realization should come at the end of 2nd para (yours is in the beginning of 3rd para). That’s why the conclusion and “what’s next” part seems rushed and cut short, we mainly learn about ur realization only and not so much about what you learn.

Par 1

* The debate motion comes in
* What she feels after

Par 2

* What you do: in the debate itself emang fail
* During this process, turns out I got easily stressed out, anxious → realization that the challenge is in myself

Par 3

* Out of this experience, it brings me to tackle my own weaknesses → what to do afterwards?