***Tell a story from your life, describing an experience that either demonstrates your character or helped to shape it. --> 650 words***

I had never really liked bracelets and thought that that would never change. I thought I'd never wear one again until earlier this year.

A slim black thread with beads strung along it like a rosary was wrapped around my wrist as I walked along the school corridors heading to my class. It was a gift from Jocelyn. Despite the kindness, I was still itching to take it off. Minutes felt like hours with the bracelet.

“I’ll take it off when she's not around, ” I said to myself.

The bracelet left a very unpleasant feeling on my wrist as it constantly moved and rubbed against my skin. I didn’t like it. I wanted to avoid this discomfort. This same phenomenon seemed to pervade other parts of my life. I was often hesitant to leap into uncomfortable activities or foreign environments, afraid I wasn’t up for it. I found myself avoiding socializing with people/relatives I don't recognize during large family gatherings. During my first year in the student council, I’d procrastinate over my duties and often say “No” or “I’m busy” to requests since I didn't want to add more responsibilities onto my plate due to fear of not meeting their expectations.

As the day drew closer to an end, I found myself in my room gazing upon the ever-growing collection of awards I’ve accumulated over the years. There was one that stood out in particular, the trophy for winning first place in the Chinese Drama Competition during 6th grade. I was signed up for the competition by my parents against my will. But thinking back, I wouldn’t have been able to accomplish this in the first place if it wasn’t for my parents forcing me to join. As I reached out for the trophy on top of the shelf, I noticed a black figure on my arm in my peripheral vision. The bracelet was still resting around my wrist. The initial feeling of discomfort i had surprisingly vanished.

I realized that if I wasn’t pushing myself out of my comfort zone, I wouldn’t have been able to improve and recognize my own capabilities. This was evident in the instance of joining the competition and wearing the bracelet. From that moment on, I promised myself that I would not back down from my future endeavors no matter how challenging or scary they may seem.

Forward a few weeks later, I participated in a hackathon with a team of 4 for the very first time in hopes to explore more about the field of computer science through app development. The hackathon required its participants to develop an application that provided a solution to a global problem of their choice and a business plan for pitching, all in just a day. Despite knowing I had close to zero experience in app development, let alone in pitching, I registered anyway. I didn’t want to succumb to my fear of failure and discomfort and let this opportunity go away. With only a few days till D-Day, I studied as much as I possibly could and, to my surprise, placed second.

These seemingly small changes in my head changed how I approach my difficulties and opportunities. I’d force myself to do challenging and daunting tasks with the mindset that I could always learn slowly along the way. Because of this, I was able to try out lots of new activities, take on new responsibilities, and did an internship. I stopped merely thinking about doing things and instead, learned not to be afraid, to take the first step, and to seize the day.

The bracelet, which initially felt like a shackle both physically and mentally, had now become proof and a constant reminder to me that sometimes life’s greatest and most valuable moments exist outside your comfort zone. You just had to push yourself to take that step. I just had to wear the bracelet.