**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? (350 words)**

Halfway through grade 8, I was diagnosed with idiopathic scoliosis. The term idiopathic means that the cause of this condition is unknown. In the cold, lifeless doctor’s office, the doctor told my parents and I that, with the rate at which my scoliosis is progressing, I would be required to wear a hard, plastic back brace for 22 hours a day. It didn’t matter if I was eating or sleeping. I still had to wear it.

This device significantly restricted my ability to run and walk, and I felt miserable because I felt trapped. Being forced to wear this device emotionally exhausted me to no end, because I felt like every remaining freedom I had left perished. I felt as if unfortunate events kept on occurring in my life for no good reason, and I grew to believe that my life has become meaningless. This all changed when I discovered a 5 minute TED-ED video on Stoicism.

Stoicism taught me that the series of events that led me to be forced to wear my back brace is beyond my control, but I can alter how I can see my back brace as. With Stoicism, I began to see my back brace as something that helps my back, instead of something that’s restricting my activity. With this clarity of mind, I began to take up hobbies I initially gave up on due to feelings of hopelessness, one of the most prominent being debate.

This led me to participate in Model United Nations, a competition where students represent a country to propose solutions to global problems. This served as an extension to the debate skills I had gotten from other debate competitions. As I became more familiar with the strategies needed to win in an MUN competition, I started to rack up more awards as a delegate. Earlier this year, I signed up to be one of the organizers of my school’s chapter of MUN. It allowed me to see MUN from the perspective of an organizer, and not as a delegate. This new activity of mine has given my life more meaning, as I feel like I am capable of turning my life around in the face of adversity.