**Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.**

My obsession with productivity started in second grade when I tasted joy of being the highest-ranking student in class. My competitiveness and drive didn’t want to let go of it. 30-minute sessions of finishing homework grew to two hours, some days maybe four-hour study sessions. I pushed aside friends and family, seeing them as mere obstacles to further improving my exam strategies.

Few years ago, my grandmother was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. On the day she died, my mom asked if I wanted to visit my grandma at the hospital saying her time isn’t far away. Little did I know that I just rejected the chance to see her one last time. Later that night, I received a text message I would never forget for the rest of my life – my grandma passed away. I instantly dropped everything and broke down crying, regretting not seeing her to this day. I felt my chest cave in and stared long at the emptiness of the numbers on my paper. I asked my mom repeatedly in disbelief, hoping this was all just a dream. For three months, I only thought about turning back time to prioritize my grandma over studying, even though I knew it was impossible. In an instant, all the A’s and 100’s on my papers seemed worthless. It made no difference whether I was first place or last.

The immense regret taught me a crucial life lesson – there isn’t always a next time in life. Second chances don’t always come, and some things in life never come around again. Realizing this, I tried to live my life without regret, using my time the best I can. It meant studying when I need to, but also spending time with family and friends when I need to. I realized there isn’t a single thing in life worth all of our time.

The obsession with chasing my academic goal alone led me to disregard anyone along the way, seeing them as distractions. My inner selfishness led me to always be distrustful of others in fear of their interference in my life. At first, accepting this realization was extremely difficult. I was afraid of sharing my thoughts and not getting the responses I wanted. However, I realized that others’ suggestions and inputs helped me reflect on myself and improve on my erroneous ways of thinking. Now, I see my family and friends as my support system in my studies.

From being an antisocial, I am now able to open up to others, build new relationships, and network with people I could only dream of in the past. Opportunities to meet new people came and went, and I was sure to take every single one of them. Meetings became chatting sessions with my team members; teaching sessions became a platform to interact with my students; family dinners became moments of sharing and supporting each other. Seeing firsthand the positive impact I’m making to my community always reminded me of the success we can achieve by cooperating with other people. Not taking life for granted and always seizing opportunities as if they would never come again helped me become more open and present with people in my life for the price of slight grade decrease.

It’s terrifying how one wrong choice could alter my life without a chance to turn back time and fix it. But I learned to turn that fear into courage by making sure I take all those opportunities. I committed to building 1000 new relationships and kept pushing through, even though deep down I knew it could never replace the one I lost with my grandma. The regret triggered a growth that made me more responsible and considerate of my relationship with others. Even in death, my beloved grandma taught me one last valuable life lesson. One day, I want even my death to bring good to others’ lives.