When I was small, I was told that eating meat is a sin since I’m born in a Buddhist family. But I couldn’t resist the temptation from meat. Having a direct thinking system, I then pray to the Buddha to ask for mercy every time after I ate meat. I always believe that there was no need to think deeper about the situation.

As I got older, my linear thinking grew with me, evolving into a problem-solving approach: meet a problem, locate the cause, and create a solution. Like when I noticed my classmates’ frustration calculating their GPA manually, I saw the problem and I made a GPA calculator. Cause and solution.

However, when I had to use intuition or indirect thinking, this was another situation entirely. I once was not good at dealing with matters that aren’t as simple as it looks like. Whenever friends met obstacles, for example, and looked to me for comfort, I seldom recognized their needs and only responded with answers they were not anticipating because I thought that’s the most direct way to solve the problem. Gradually, friends stopped talking to me about their personal lives and I started to feel that I was losing them.

My solution was simple: become stronger in everything so my friends will have no choice but to depend on me. Needless to say, this backfired, sending my friends farther away from me. In fact, I nearly lost my closest friend.

It was during an online Associated Student Body (ASB) meeting. I met a situation that I believed was unfair: I was informed that we were changing the Winter Ball event theme, which I had been preparing for a long time. I thought the decision was the outcome of an undemocratic discussion because I never knew about this decision before and I didn’t agree it. So, I opposed aggressively, sending heated texts in the group chat. Nobody sent anything after that. While I was happy about my win that made everyone afraid, my closest friend, who is also in ASB, came to me privately and talked about her concerns. During the debate with her, my position slowly shifted to others. She told me that instead of making a decision without me, I had missed the meeting regarding to that decision. I started to realize that I had been wrong from the beginning. However, because I refused to listen and I didn’t want to admit I was wrong, I kept fighting until she started to get angry and told me that she would never talk about such matters with me again. I found out that I had crossed the line. I tried to soothe her, but it didn’t work. I became anxious and depressed, thinking about the wrongdoing I had committed.

I scrolled back through the group chat history. Reading the messages, I could see that she was trying to reason with me and that I had just been trying to debate and win. It wasn’t that I was a linear thinker; it was that I was a bad listener. I wanted to fix situations my way, without any input from other people.

I realized that if I didn’t admit my mistake, I could lose my closet friend. Closing my eyes, I took a deep breath. I then sent a long and an sincere apology letter to both my close friend and the ASB.

I found that throughout all the times, I only looked at the factor that I believed caused the problem, but didn’t listen to or ask for other people’s perspectives. I didn’t see that I was the problem because I wanted to fix the people as if they were as simple as coding a calculator.

But the situation has allowed me to put down my pride and focus on what really matters: consideration for others.