We learn our most valuable lessons in life from struggling with our limitations rather than from enjoying our successes.

Write a response in which you discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with the claim. In developing and supporting your position, be sure to address the most compelling reasons and/or examples that could be used to challenge your position.

Essay Response:

‘No pain, no gain’ is a proverb that has, at times, been reduced to a cliche by many who try to justify struggles on the road to success. The prompt claims that our most valuable lessons arise from these very struggles. In my opinion, I agree with this statement, albeit only to a certain extent. There is room for debate in this issue, which must be acknowledged when evaluating such a claim. To cement this position, three main aspects of the issue must be considered.

First, difficulties force us to look at things from other points of view, and target problems in more direct ways. Such positive outcomes may not be immediate, but is what most hardworking people look forward to, and strive to accomplish. Take the example of Douglas Wreden, a live-streamer on Twitch, a platform for video streaming. He was pursuing his bachelor’s degree when he started streaming, as a way to loosen up after dealing with his tough college classes. He was financially struggling at the time, and was not performing well in exams. This led him to pursue streaming full-time, and was quite a risky decision; he could have chosen to study full-time instead. He still had an average of around 10 viewers per stream, but he just kept going: He found ways to improve his stream, making it more interactive for the viewers by adding coded elements to games that a viewer could play through the chat box. He had health problems and had to redo his schedule at one point, but he always knew to stand back up and keep going. He did give his health attention, but managed to balance this with his streaming career. In fact, he now manages to get around 5000 to 10000 viewers on his streams. His career is thus a testament to the idea that struggles can lead to successes, especially when fought against in a well-rounded way.

Second, in a more systemic format, people who have historically had to endure difficulties and struggle, are found to excel when they effectively deal with the problems that they face, rather than ignoring them. Consider the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) fields, which have been shown to employ disproportionately fewer women than other areas: Women who try to pursue a job in this field are faced not only by the difficulties of the field itself, but also by the systemic prejudices of the people employed in it, and their own internalized opinions caused by such a system. The barrier to entry is based on the lack of access to education for women as compared to men. Despite such difficulties, studies have shown that women who get into the field and continue on with determination (and with their skill) are able to outperform men, on average. While the gender disparity of the field is very slowly reducing, it is undeniable that women who have excelled in the current system pose an excellent example for reaching success through struggles.

Finally, one may ask the question, “Are struggles always necessary for success? If it is, then does that not signal a problem with the current systems?” This is a valid question, and does bring into question the validity of the claim. If one aims to achieve success, they would end up in a vicious cycle of putting themselves through pain to reach there – does it have to be this way? The prompt’s sentiment is sometimes misused against people who do not have the means or opportunities to ‘get back up’ and keep running towards success. Such uses of these platitudes would only prove detrimental: It is in bad taste to reduce someone’s issues to be a ‘path to success.’

In conclusion, there are no easy answers to this issue, but when the statement is used in good faith, it proves true in most cases. Some forms of success may not require as much pain as currently forced upon people, and must be targeted by bypassing the system in a clever manner. After all, “Smart work is better than hard work.”