**7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you’ve already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.**

**OR**

**2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?**

“I’m Lovin It”, a catchphrase to some, but a definition of my childhood. McDonalds has been with me my entire life. I visit every McDonalds in every country I visit, I eat there when I win or I loss, and my competitive swimming journey started with a loss before it had even begun.

Ever since I could remember, I was obsessed with the water. I would head over to the local public pool every day after school, and spend hours just floating in the water. There was even a moment where earlier in the day I had fallen off my bike and badly scrapped my knees, but I still continued to jump into the pool. My blood and flesh mixed with chlorine was apparently my type of fun back then.

When I got into middle school, the school’s swimming coach was scouting out potential candidates to join the team. I watched little by little as all my close friends got into the team, where I slowly saw that I would be the one left out.

I got flashbacks of when my parents would fight tooth and nail to keep me in school. They literally had nothing, but worked back to back jobs even on the weekends to make ends meet. We slept on couches and would not eat so that I could eat. This later became symbolic of the role the Happy Meal would actually play in serving as my brief, happy escape from reality.

Reflecting on this, I decided that I would persevere my way through and find my own way into the team to make my own passionate ends meet. I began watching Olympic videos, where I tried replicating the movements, and spent every single day training for at least an hour, mixing my sweat with chlorine and with lungs that felt grilled. I clawed my way into the team, and after all of that, I made sure that I would give my everything to the team. I started off with a high note, immediately placing in my region’s top 3.

However, as time went by my opportunities dwindled. I missed out on several chances to attend national and international swim meets, making me find closure through my chicken nuggets. Nevertheless, I learned to make the best of what I had, and when I was not the best anymore, I turned to assistant coaching. This drive, was one that focused is less on me, and more on my hyperactive teammates. I made sure that everyone attended practice, and I shouted and cheered for them as loud as I could every single day. I added their insights into team discussions, and united them with my huddles and quirky jokes. What started as a goal for us to place in the top 3, ended with us doing it on 3 separate occasions at a regional level.

As I sit down and eat my McDonalds with the rest of the team, I reflect upon a time when I pushed myself so hard to get into the team, and now I was doing that exact same thing but this time it was on my teammates. I started off as a reject and persevered my way into the team. I was able to learned how to motivate myself, but most importantly I was able to help motivate others with my sarcastic and loud personality. I had ups and downs, but these did not stop me from trying every single day, and I owe it all to the Happy Meal my parents persevered to get for me.

Word count: 722

Hi! So, I completely applaud and appreciate your determination to get into the swimming team, and you explained enough about it. That being said, there are a few things we could strengthen depending on what you want to focus on. While the McDonald’s story kind of shows the significance of McD in your life and your experience with swimming, it could take the focus of the essay from the obstacles you faced. I briefly mentioned this in the first comment, but if you’d like to answer prompt 2, it would be incredibly effective if you talked more about how your first loss was like, and maybe the mentality that drove you to still continue swimming, followed by why and what event caused you to choose to assist others with their dream instead.

At the moment, the obstacle was unclear, I’m assuming your focus in on the setbacks and failures you had during swimming. But I don’t fully understand what you learned because there is no reflective statement, did you realize that you wanted others to succeed where you could not? Did you want to make others happy with your swimming experience? How exactly did you coach the swimmers? Please be careful and keep it from sounding like you’re only settling for a position as the assistant coach because you can’t be a swimmer.

I really understand the feeling of wanting to add a smart idea or catchphrase, hence the McDonald’s. So if you really feel passionate about it, it would be better if you could talk about McDonald’s more and how it affected you as a person. Was this a food you ate during special occasions? Was this your go-to pick-me-up meal? Specifically, think of why an admission officer would find your passion for McD great? We want to get to know you, and how is your personality deeply rooted into McD?

I find that a good way to decide what to include is: if I interviewed you about that topic (e.g McDonald’s or swimming), how prepared and passionate are you going to respond?

*Community disruptions such as COVID-19 and natural disasters can have deep and long-lasting impacts. If you need it, this space is yours to describe those impacts. Colleges care about the effects on your health and well-being, safety, family circumstances, future plans, and education, including access to reliable technology and quiet study spaces.*

* *Do you wish to share anything on this topic? Y/N*
* *Please use this space to describe how these events have impacted you.*

When COVID-19 hit, my family was hit with something the world calls fraud. My maternal grandmother was one day suddenly gasping for air, and the doctors had already diagnosed her with COVID-19 before her results had even come out. This placed my entire family on self-quarantine where we all feel under the assumption that one of us may have it. After time, she passed away in the hospital, which they then revealed that she was misdiagnosed. Turns out, as my cousin who was a doctor revealed, if a hospital reports a COVID-19 death, they receive a large bonus from the government.

I was surprised to see this lack of integrity in an institution that everyone was both afraid and respectful for. I am certainly grateful for the health care workers, but I realized that if a hospital, out of all places, could go to these lengths, then the world isn’t as clean as I thought. I started seeing things from a different perspective that in life many things are based on the business sides of things. I developed a broader understanding of how an actual society works and all the qualities of it. Most importantly, I recognized that if my family had gone through something like this, then there definitely were other misled families too. While it may be understandable that this was done as a precaution, it came to show me that in a time of great need, there is little consideration of procedure. But after all, when we’re trying to survive a struggling time, we all work to survive.

Alternative story:

Being COVID-19 negative has seemed more like a leverage these days. Throughout the pandemic, my parents found it very hard to find workers to help them out. They took many precautions in making sure these workers could also work from our home, so that it could be efficient. Thus, they took a lot of precautions in making sure these workers were COVID-19 negative. However, after 3 days of working, these workers had already threatened to leave and break the conditions of their contracts. On precisely that third day, they had attempted to destroy the house and run away.

It was this precise moment that my body’s instinct took charge. I reacted with swift action, immediately dropping all of my studies and running to my parents’ help. I was surprised that I was able to subconsciously act without even knowing the context. But probably the scariest moments of this experience was the moment where everyone was arguing with the security guards and the police. Hearing my parents shout out loud and being disappointed was a heartache for me, seeing how they had put in so hard to try to find a way to make things work, only to find it completely backstab them. From this whole experience, I developed a sense of action. I would watch over the house while my parents were out talking with the guards, while also simultaneously looking after my younger brother. COVID-19 taught me and my family to not easily assume things will go our way, and that we all need to prepare for the absolute worst, especially the unexpected.

First, I’d like to offer my deepest condolences for both the unfortunate experiences you had to go through. It’s definitely not something anyone would want. These stories do show the setbacks you experienced, and while it is undoubtedly uncomfortable to talk about, it could also show the strength you had during bad times in your life. One thing to note for both of them, if you do choose to write about them, is that you don’t want to sound pessimistic. Sound realistic. Acknowledge the losses and negative aspects to society or people, but don’t condemn anyone. Especially when it comes to police matters or the medical institutions, you don’t want to give too much sensitive material. For both stories, it would definitely answer prompt 7, maybe not as much for prompt 2, but I’d still like to see more about how you were affected. The focus of the two stories so far is your grandmother and your parents, we want to see more of yourself. What did you feel about this experience? How does this affect your understanding of yourself or of other people? If you want to develop the emotional aspect, be more empathic and just a bit more vulnerable. Again, this must be a sensitive topic for you, so we understand if you’d prefer to talk about something else.