## ESSAY

**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?**

A pair of aged beige curtains attempted to block the sunlight from creeping into the room. The sterility of the room overwhelmed my senses, forcing me to confront my discomfort. As the coldness of the gel coated my torso. I felt the pressure of the smooth plastic as it massaged the surface area of my stomach. I hear the clicking of the keys as the doctor took screenshots of the monochromatic screen. He whispered to the nurse as they called my mom in who was waiting outside. I hear the sound of my heart throbbing against the cage of my chest, synchronizing with the ticking of the wall clock, counting my life away. Dazed and confused, not knowing what to expect. I sat with my mom next to me. “Your daughter has an ovarian tumor”.

What was meant to be a quick visit to the gynecologist became a point of inflection in my life.

I grabbed the charm bracelet on my wrist tight. I stared down at it as the charms blurred into one, an abundance of voices overrunning each other as my thoughts zoned out. All my hopes and dreams of having a daughter, starting a family of my own all gone, taken from me in the lengths of minutes. My eyes fill with tears as my head fills with questions. Is my future gone for good? Growing up, I have always loved children, loved the idea of raising some of my own, this bracelet just one out of many things I hope to pass down one day.

However, I didn’t want this to be a defining moment for me, I didn’t want to take this as a time where I gave up on everything. I took this as fuel, I didn’t want to lose any opportunities. If there was the slightest chance that I wasn’t able to have children of my own, I wanted to know that I was living life to the fullest. I have always had the idea and longing to start a business of my own, to create something to share my love and passion for fashion. If there was the slightest chance that I am not able to share this love to my own children, then I hoped to at least have the courage to share it to the world. I decided to invest my savings into growing “Ourdrobe”, my online fashion marketplace. I wanted to use this as a platform where people can make use of old clothes hanging in their closets, giving them new life and new meaning. My thinking is that if I am able to overcome all these adversities then these clothes should also be given a second chance to be valued and loved. My love of fashion which I hoped to share with my own children, I wanted to share with the world in case this tumor meant that I am unable to share it with my own.

Some people say that life happens when you’re busy making plans. My tumor showed me the unexpected nature of life. I never realized the limitations to what I can control. I was so fixated on sticking to one plan that I didn’t look left or right to see what else life had to offer. Neglecting what was right underneath my nose. So, instead of occupying my thoughts planning “what’s next”, I learned to take life bit by bit. Taking risks along the way.

Though physically gone, my tumor left a longing impression on me mentally. It taught me to embrace changes and to be more lenient with myself. When things do not go as planned, I remember that every challenge, every adversity contains within it the seeds of opportunity and growth which allow me to take on life with an open mind. Continuously identifying the silver lining during times of conflict.

I still love to plan but now I have learnt to use a plan not as a set of rules, but as a guide to keep me on track without forgetting to look for other opportunities life has to offer and taking them on even if it means having to take a detour. I now understand that life is about accepting the challenges along the way and choosing to keep moving forward. Savoring the continuing journey as I move forward in the next chapter of my life: university.

Hi Raisa,

So sorry to hear about the ovarian tumor ☹

This is very brave of you to be open and write about this experience.

Reading this, I think there are 2 problems here that could be the focus of this prompt: the ovarian tumor and developing Ourdrobe – and I think it would be better to focus on 1 of them, and probably have the other one just briefly mentioned if applicable.

Here are a few suggestions from me:

1. If the struggle that you chose to focus on is the ovarian tumor, here are a few things I think worth covering:
   1. Firstly, elaborate more on how it affected your life and talk about things that got impacted – I think this would be important to note so that people will get a better picture of how it affected the different aspects of your life.
      1. How did the tumor affect your daily life and life in general?
      2. Did it hurt? If yes, how did the pain affect your activities?
      3. Were your studies affected?
      4. Was your relationship with your friends/families affected?
      5. How did it affect your well-being?
         * I think this point has been answered by how it highly impacted your dream of having a daughter – which could definitely be briefly included in the prompt as one of the impacts it had on you.
   2. Secondly, write as detail as possible on the process of overcoming the struggle. Elaborate on what you did so that we could tell how you’ve changed, and how you were shaped through the struggle. If one of the ways were developing Ourdrobe – talk about how Ourdrobe started. Where did the idea come from, and how did it help you? Make sure that it is relatable to the struggles/difficulties you’ve mentioned in the previous part.
      1. How did you overcome what you’ve mentioned in the first part?
      2. Did anyone help you, or did you seek help?
      3. Was there any significant thing that happened, that helped you?
      4. Example: “After stressing out for some time, I started opening up to my closed ones and started sharing my hearts out. My friends and families would encourage me to look beyond my circumstances – that being diagnosed with an ovarian tumor is not the end of all. Slowly, I started to force myself to……”
   3. Thirdly, talk about what you’ve learned. From how it affected you, to how you overcome it – what were the lessons? Make sure to relate it back to the points you have mentioned earlier to make the correlation clear.
      1. Was it being able to adjust and adapt?
      2. Was it perseverance – that through this sickness you didn’t give up, but you put your head up high and still look out for opportunity?

If this option was chosen, I would suggest putting more emphasis and allocating more word count to how you overcome this struggle – so that we can draw the attention to your positive spirit and your persevering character. ☺

1. Another option that I think could be used for this prompt is: struggle in developing Ourdrobe – and have the ovarian tumor as a background and just briefly mentioned, focusing more on Ourdrobe. If this is your prompt, I would suggest considering these ideas:
   1. Introduction: start by mentioning your desire to develop an online fashion marketplace, the contribution you wanted to bring, and briefly mention the struggles of growing this business (to which I think you could include getting diagnosed with ovarian tumor as one of the struggles).
   2. Then, elaborate and write in detail the obstacles of developing Ourdrobe.
      1. Was it time or finance management?
      2. Was it getting the business proposal done?
      3. Did you do with a partner/partners? Were there any difficulties in this area?
      4. What was the hardest/stressing part of developing and growing this business?
      5. How did having an ovarian tumor impact this?
         * Perhaps in terms of pain that affected your need to work and move around.
   3. After elaborating on the obstacles, talk about how you overcome it.
      1. Did anyone help you?
      2. Did you put a lot of time researching?
      3. Was there anything you needed to change?
         * E.g. lifestyle, business structure, etc.
   4. Lastly, talk about what you’ve learned from developing Ourdrobe, along with the struggles you experienced. A few ideas to consider – if applicable:
      1. Was it trust?
      2. Was it better planning?
      3. Was it time management – if yes, explain how.
      4. Was it being more open to the people around to receive inputs and critics?

Overall, I think you have great stories and experiences to tell that would be able to reflect your persevering character and ability to bounce back amidst difficulties. ☺