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 (650 word) (please help shorten the essay as well)

I was a real renaissance child, in the sense that I was immersed in countless activities to challenge myself. At age 5, my parents enrolled me in piano class. I later took up violin not long after. In my early primary school years, I joined a soccer team. In middle school I took interest in basketball and joined the team. And a few years after, I took up golfing. But unfortunately, I can’t brag about most of those activities. Not only did I not achieve much, I quit most of them. Yes, I am what you would call a failed-renaissance man, jack of all trades, master of none.

As a younger boy attending a class full of older piano students, I grew intimidated and felt the pressure to play with the same standard of my older peers. But I never quite caught up despite practicing twice as hard. My hope of becoming a good piano player faded after a few years and by the time I quit, no one said anything. It was around the time I started played the violin.

Fortunately, I grew fond of the violin early on and realized I could excel at it. I picked up musical pieces easily and joined my school’s junior orchestra. My teachers had great pride for me; yet fear and a sense of inferiority that I had during my piano training grew again in me. Every note and every mistake pained me and reminded me that I was not living up to my potential. As a result, I soon lacked the motivation to practice and I put the violin on a sidebar, losing joy in playing the instrument I loved.

The same thing happened with soccer. I joined the primary school soccer team and would train and play literally every day of the week. But it didn’t take long before I worried, “What if I became a burden to the team? What if I wasn’t good enough?”. Like other things, I let my value be determined by what others thought of me. This was a pattern. I was too afraid of failing that I ironically failed. Talk about the power of imagination.

As I moved to a different school, I picked up basketball. I still played the violin and do other activities, not out of joy but sheer fear of quitting. I had a great passion for basketball, but I lacked the athleticism to play it at a high level. In the first year, I failed to make the team. In retrospect, I probably would have quit if it were back then. But I continued with the goal of improving and hopefully making the team the next year. But second year came, and I still failed. I practiced twice as hard and try to lose weight to be fitter to make sure I get in the next year. And when the third year rolled around, I tried out for the basketball team but still could not make the cut. Fourth year came, I had hoped that my efforts were enough to at least make the junior varsity team. To my surprise, I ended up making the varsity team. There was no trick or shortcuts that made me get into the team. There was no epiphany or a regime that helped me (I’ve tried it all). I learnt when I made the team that in all my activities, the why is just as important as the how. My passion for basketball was different because I did not do this for others. I didn’t do it because my parents wanted me to, or my teachers, nor my friends. This was a decision I made for myself, I realized I was doing it for the right ‘why’.

I learnt that with all the other activities, I did it because I was somewhat good at it or that I enjoyed it. But I never had a reason or a ‘why’ to push me in all the other journeys. I realized that a strong ‘reason’ or ‘why’ is just like a strong foundation, we can’t push through the thick and skin unless we had a strong will behind it. The wind will only take a boat a certain distance if the boat has no clear direction. Now I approach any challenge the same way: Making sure I know why I do what I do. My changed views also led me to pursue things incrementally, one step at a time, while reminding myself of why I do the things I do when I hit a wall.