**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

*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.