*Prompt: 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?*

“Does being colorblind limit who I want to be?”

For many years, people have always enforced a limitation upon me based on one flaw. I’ve always had a problem with my sight leading me and my family to an Ophthalmologist. Protanomaly is what the doctor said. Somehow, there has been this unknown stigma from people surrounding me (family friends, distant family, etc.) that “one with colorblind cannot become an engineer.” This was a path of destruction that has led me astray from my basic instinct. Something that makes me just want to disconnect from the world.

Concerned about me, my dad tried to cheer me up by gifting me a 90s Toyota Kijang for my 14th birthday. I was excited, but not for long. As I turned on the ignition key, along with the sound of the stuttering engine, an ominous and viscous black smoke was seen dispersing out from its muffler. I opened the hood and was immediately overwhelmed at the sight of the complex organization of the components and the seemingly different colored cables protruding out of the engines. Funnily, I felt an immediate connection with that engine. I had mixed feelings: contented by the opportunity to play with the machine yet disheartened by the wall - my eyes - that hinders me from getting to more of this object.

It was tough

As I studied the Toyota and saw my dad’s enthusiasm in his eyes, I felt a strong pressure magnifying my fear of losing those eyes. Trying to retain his enthusiasm, I disassembled all the cables from the engine in an attempt to fix it. Disassembling them means I have to know how to assemble them back. Thus, my frustration rose as I tried to identify their colors. I realized I couldn’t stick to my current situation. So, I tried enlisting my sister’s help to stay beside me as my color translator.

That didn’t work out too well as she couldn’t stay by my side forever. I needed a better solution.

Inspired by my sister's obsession with Sarasa-colored pens, I noticed that each pen has its own label indicating its respective colors. So I borrowed her pen collections, spread them out on my portable workshop table, and began comparing the colors of the cables and pens side by side. It worked! It was a less reliant solution. However, there is one flaw: carrying hundreds of pens everywhere I go is inconvenient.

So, I shifted my brain into the fifth gear to search for a better and more practical solution.

Remembering my recent science class’s litmus paper experiment, I thought of an idea to create my own “color litmus test” device based on my previous Sarasa pen solution. It started out with a 7-by-4 cm sheet of standard white paper with varying shades of diverse colors and their respective labels as my first prototype. Next, I upgraded it using a *rite in the rain* waterproof paper and laminated them to make it more durable. This is more practical because I can put it in my pocket, bring it everywhere, and it won’t be easily damaged.

A few days later...

Me: “I won’t guess the color this time. This is green right”`

Dad: “You got it right on your own, son. I’m proud of you.”

The happiness in his voice was irreplaceable. I'm astounded at how I was able to create something so meaningful to me with just a pen and paper (and plastic). The greatest barrier in life is not the lack of skills. It’s how I let other people’s discouraging voices get to me. I learned to treat them as white noises and eventually learned to use them as fuel to drive my perseverance. Now, I’m grateful for what I have. Now, I will treat any challenges in life as temporary speed bumps acting as traction towards the finish line. Perseverance and confidence are key.