**UW’s prompt: Tell a story from your life, describing an experience that either demonstrates your character or helped to shape it: (650 words max)**

***- Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.***

Monkeys and Chris Evans’ physique… These are why I got into calisthenics.

I know this combination may sound weird, but who wouldn’t want to look like a super-soldier while having the agility of a monkey? I know I do!

During my search for a method to achieve both, I landed on a YouTube video showcasing a person propping himself up perpendicular to a pole: a literal human flag. It was as if he had defied the laws of gravity, and all I could think of was how much it reminded me of a monkey’s complete control of its body. I went bananas over it. Ever since, calisthenics had become my way of working out for the last three years.

A year into calisthenics, I felt phenomenal. It felt like I was improving at an unbelievable rate that I truly believed I was knowledgeable enough to become a personal trainer, or so I thought until I tried coaching my gym enthusiast cousin. He was always an observant one and quick to point out any flaws. I walked him through my usual routine hoping for admiration, instead he criticized me for how random my workout was. “This must be why I haven’t seen as much of a change in your physique,” he said.

Fuming at first, it slowly turned into sadness on my way home. I couldn’t feel as confident as I did before. In a desperate attempt to boost my ego once more, I flexed into the mirror only to see a sad sight of an overweight kid as my cousin’s words kept echoing in my head. Looking back, he was right: my workouts were basically a sloppy mix of exercises from different videos; all by different YouTubers. I was just blindly cramming these exercises that I thought were cool into a single workout that had no relation to each other.

Something had to change.

I overclocked my brain for days to find a better way of planning a calisthenics workout. Alas, my brain overheated… So, I decided to take a break and watch a Korean drama called Startup. It was then when one of the memorable scenes appeared where the protagonist was taking notes in preparation of facing a challenging conundrum. It was such a simple act but I knew it was my ticket out of my slump.

Following the character’s footsteps, I took notes on all of the videos in my Youtube calisthenics playlist: the different movements, proper forms, and number of sets and reps to name a few. It wasn’t apparent at first, but the more notes I took, the more I began noticing patterns that allowed me to think in algorithms—putting to use the knowledge I developed from computer science. This new note-taking habit enabled me to gain a fuller understanding of calisthenics, allowing me to produce a more structured workout routine.

Six months later, still utilising my new found habit. I keep track of all my progress: body measurements, fat percentage, muscle mass, etc. I saw more progress than I ever did the first year. My old shirts don't fit my shoulders now, I dropped 3% in body fat, and have been comfortably speedrunning through multiple calisthenics skills like handstands, L-sits, and muscle-ups.

Today, my more algorithmic thinking has also been positively affecting my school grades and other aspects of my life, such as doing chores and even my wellbeing. Not only am I able to grocery shop in the most efficient way, I also got a boost of confidence since I now have a plan when I’m presented with difficult challenges, allowing me to take risks that I would have never before.

Although I am still far from looking like Chris Evans or moving like monkeys, my newfound habit has propelled me into taking the first steps of this long journey, which seems more attainable now than ever. In addition with some other benefits.