1. 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?

**WRITE YOUR RESPONSE BELOW:**

My neck kept twitching and my eyes kept blinking. I couldn’t stop these movements from happening. It was like I was a puppet with no control and the puppeteer was trying to move every muscle in my body at the same time. I was sitting in the back of my 6th grade math class trying to not draw attention to myself and my tics. I already got enough inquisitive looks and comments that day to make me feel insecure about my Tourette’s. For years, I let Tourette’s control my life, but I eventually learned that these outbursts don’t define me entirely.

As a toddler, I had night terrors, which is a symptom of Tourette’s, and it led to me being tested and diagnosed with Tourette’s. After a few years, my night terrors disappeared. In its place, other twitches began appearing as I entered middle school. It became painfully obvious that Tourette’s was going to be something I had to accept as a part of my life. During my first year in middle school, I started developing a heavy blink, a nose quiver, and a head shake, or as my family called it, “the Justin Bieber hair flip.” These twitches became a burden on my life. It was hard to focus in school and soccer because I was constantly bothered with annoying muscle jerks and movements. On top of that, my Tourette’s began to attract a lot of attention, so I felt out of place wherever I went. As a middle schooler, it was hard to accept something that, as a dramatic pre-teen, I thought had ruined my childhood. In retrospect, however, it did the complete opposite.

Over the next few years of having Tourette’s, I had to accept that these twitches made me different from everyone else. In reality, I wasn’t very different, but I learned to accept and embrace my differences. I learned positive coping mechanisms through one of my favorite soccer players, Tim Howard, who wrote a book about his life with Tourette’s. Not only did his book make me feel less alone while struggling with Tourette’s, but it also gave me ideas of how to control/ ease my twitching. I was able to learn valuable tips from him and implement these into my own life. For example, Tim Howard had a twitch in his neck that would make his neck stiffen. To combat this, he would hold his breath and relax his muscles until the twitch went away. I adopted this, and even though this strategy didn’t prevent the tick from happening, it made me more aware of every tick I had and easier to control. As I learned this strategy, I started implementing similar psychological tricks in school and soccer. I learned strategies that would lengthen my focus time in school, manage my breathing in soccer, and overall connect my mind and my body.

I consider myself lucky to have been put in an uncomfortable position that made me more mature, and it made me realize that people judge each other too quickly. People assumed things about me and my tics before they even knew me, going the lengths of mocking me for them. It made me realize people were cruel and critical of other people’s situations, and I wanted to be someone who wouldn’t judge a person based off their circumstances. Doing this, I’ve met people I would’ve never talked to, and I was able to support them by relating my circumstances with theirs. It also got me interested in volunteer work, whether that was for the homeless or coaching soccer to kids in my area. I was hoping to change one of their lives for the better. If I didn’t have an effect on any of the people I met, I’m still glad I did and still do this because each and every one of them has changed my life for the better.