“I’m not good enough,” that was my go-to sentiment for an extended period of time. Ninth grade, biology class, the subject that I absolutely loved the most and was most knowledgeable about, I floundered in speaking up in class. For one of my teacher’s tough questions, I knew the answer: it was mitochondria. Yet, my brain kept second-guessing myself: what if I got it wrong? what if my classmates laugh at me? Every attempt to raise my hand resulted in slowly putting it down and trying not to make any eye contact with my teacher. After minutes of gazing down, my teacher announced the answer: it was mitochondria. I was right the first time, except I didn’t say it out loud. Remorse of being a coward, I imagined how awesome it would be for me to answer the correct answer to the knotty question. But time wouldn’t rewind; I had to suck up my own failure and walk to the next class.

Determined not to repeat my failed past, I made up my mind to speak up at least once in my next class, Latin. Powerpoint slides flipped through as my teacher lectured about ancient Rome. I was enjoying my time in a question-free zone, well, for at least half of the class. Then, red alert for the debut of the question for the class: who are the founders of Rome? Remembering the Roman mythology I read about, I knew the answer: it was Romulus and Remus. I raised my hand and started saying, “It was Romu…” I hesitated. Pictures of me answering the question wrong passed my eyes one after another. What if I got the question wrong? What if my classmates laugh at me? I was second-guessing myself again. A flashback from the last biology class went through my brain; failure to express myself haunted me. This time, I want to give it a shot. “It was Romulus and Remus,” I finished the sentence firmly. My teacher heard my answer, and with a bright smile, she said, “Great job!” Flourishing my heart was a new wave of energy, confidence. I feel the joy of speaking up, the joy of being myself.

Such joy carried over to the next day’s English class, where we were having a discussion about the Odyssey. Entering the class with confidence, I was ready to present my views on Odysseus. Once everyone was settled, the discussion began. I volunteered to speak first, “I believe Odysseus is a brave man with high intellect, making him withstand the challenges coming back to Ithaca and a true epic hero.” Claim check, evidence check, analysis check. Proud of my argument, I sat back down relaxed with ease. Not long after, another of my classmates started making his point, “I think Odysseus isn’t an epic hero. In fact, he is so evil and cruel that he slaughtered numerous innocent suitors.” Hearing this, my eyes blanked out. Was my view of Odysseus wrong all this time? My top two biggest worries, being wrong and being laughed at for being wrong, all landed in front of me. Tears were running in my eyes, my hands shaking vibrantly. The world in front of me seemed to be upside-down, and I felt like a total failure. I hate being confident; it dragged me down to being more insecure about myself. After class ended, ready to dash out and burst into tears, I felt a gentle tap on my back. “Hey, I really like your view on Odysseus; I know it is different than mine, but I appreciate your view