



Y a l e U n i v e r s i t y

- A c c e p t e d C o l l e g e E s s a y -

SELF-MIND

JULY 22 Last year was meant to be a typical Sunday. Just like every Sunday, my mother and I were getting ready to visit my older brother at his Waikiki apartment, where we would talk for a little while. But July 22nd was different. That chilly morning, we got a phone call from his roommate telling us my brother was going to the emergency room. As we drove to Queen's Hospital, I didn't know what to think. Although I tried to assure myself that nothing serious could have happened to him, anxiety clouded my mind.

My brother, Tyson, emigrated from Vietnam with my mom and my other older brother to the United States in 1990, with dreams of a new life and fresh opportunities. He enrolled in high school with virtually no knowledge of the English language. Even though he had to simultaneously manage a part-time job at McDonald's, he excelled in academics and was the top of his class in calculus.

At 34 years old, he was the epitome of health: he ran marathons every year, had a healthy diet, and never smoked or drank alcohol. When I got to the ER and saw him lying in the hospital bed, he looked like the Tyson that I always knew. Nothing seemed wrong. He just seemed tired, and he didn't have the energy to speak.

However, coming back from an MRI scan, my brother seemed different. His eyes were unfocused and dazed, as if he didn't see the room in front of him. Uneasiness and fear rushed down my spine. I shouted for help, just as my brother's body started to spasm. I felt a profound emotion surging up in me, one that I had never experienced before--a wrenching sense of trepidation, laced with sickening adrenaline. The seizure took control of his body, and he began to foam at the mouth. His body seized up, but I was frozen still. I didn't know what to do. I felt useless and terrified.

Tyson told me, when I was just a kid, not to work while I was in high school. I was young, though, and still wanted to work because I wanted to make money, like him. During his high school years, he took on a part-time job after school, even though it meant he had to come home late every night. Often, he would stay up through the early hours of the morning, determined to complete his schoolwork. He held down the job, despite its exhausting physical toll, because he had to: he had to assist with the bills and support my mom, so that she could take English classes at the local community college. Tyson said that I didn't have to work, because he would always be there to support me.

While my brother was in the hospital, my mother and I went there every day from before dawn to late at night, when the streets were empty. Tyson had developed severe brain inflammation as a result of the seizure. He had dozens of tests done: X-rays, MRIs, blood tests, spinal taps, a bronchoscopy, and even a brain biopsy. A labyrinth of IV tubes, wires, and cables were hooked up to his body, monitoring his life signs and feeding dozens of chemicals and solutions into his bloodstream. The doctors kept him constantly sedated. His brain inflammation was life-threatening, and he caught a case of severe pneumonia. His doctors had to place him on life support. In three weeks, my brother had gone from being in the best shape of his life, from being a veritable Superman, to laying on his deathbed.

When I was a kid, I was a crybaby. I cried when I didn't get the toy I wanted. I cried when I didn't get the food I wanted. However, at some point during my childhood, around the age of six, I stopped crying. No matter how much I was teased or pushed around, I never cried. No matter how much I was mocked about my clothes, or my ethnicity, I didn't cry.

August 11 last year was the first time since childhood that I cried. It was the day that my brother passed away. And it was the first time that I ever saw my mom cry. It was a traumatizing experience, and for a while I was depressed that such a tragedy could occur so arbitrarily to someone like my brother: someone who was strong, someone who was healthy, someone who lived by a strong moral code and never sacrificed his values for material rewards. But after a while, I realized that the circumstances of his death were not a refutation of his beliefs, but

instead, a reminder of their importance. Even though we cannot control the twists and turns of life, we must deal with them as best we can. My brother, even though he didn't know English, enrolled in school and ultimately excelled. And at the same time, to help our mother go to school on the side, he took on a part-time job. Certainly he must have wished that he hadn't faced those disadvantages, but he didn't complain. rather, he faced the realities of his situation head-on, and succeeded. Tyson's death was a tragic reflection of the cold, random chance of nature, but it was in no way any verdict on his philosophy: instead, I realized, it served as a clear reminder to me that the worst can happen to even the best, and that the strength of an individual lies in his ability to maintain his values when faced with such difficult situations. Today, I still hold onto the lessons that my brother taught me through his actions: to put the needs of your family first, to always persevere in the face of adversity, and to never compromise your ideals for petty desires. To lose heart in these values because of his death, then, would be a harsh disservice to Tyson's legacy.

HERITAGE

“Heritage” is the first word in my family dictionary, a noun and adverb, for who we are and how we live. My parents taught me that my heritage defines my identity. Through honorific speech towards my elders and adherence to traditional values, I accepted Korean customs as part of the duality that defines my life in America.

Yet, a turbulent disunity stormed under that surface of peaceful coexistence. Though I outwardly represented the model Korean-American son, I loathed fitting this stereotypical mold. My shell was so well-constructed, however, that others mistook me for a successful immigrant. I felt as if I were ripped from the very fabric of my American birthplace, and plunged into a vacuum between my ancestral home and the world I lived in. I felt that my heritage was a short anchor against the relentlessly rising tide: I had to break free—or go under.

While struggling with this chain, however, I came to appreciate what my heritage offered. As a martial arts instructor, I supported students in building discipline and character. As a bilingual tutor, I helped immigrant children adapt to life in America. Soon, I realized that my heritage was an instrument for harmonizing personal development with service to others.

When I was selected to serve in the HOBY World Leadership Congress, my family’s financial circumstances did not cover the \$1,350 required fee. By infusing my American entrepreneurial energy with Asian medicine, I covered the cost by selling herbal products at my martial arts studio. Though the novelty of my venture brought me to the verge of bankruptcy, I persisted. By researching products, competitors and clientele, I streamlined my inventory to best serve my customers.

Eventually, I created a business aimed at offering others a healthy lifestyle. Sweaty students gulped green tea and chocolate-flavored snacks, dropping dollars for the cause that lay within my cardboard cashbox. Supported by outside donations, I became greater L.A.’s ambassador in Washington D.C. Infused with new inspiration, I returned with a project grant to spread the martial arts lifestyle of discipline, confidence, and respect.

As my heritage anchored itself to the bedrock of my battles, I integrated Korean tradition with my American identity. Fusing service with civic duty, I entered the L.A. County Sheriff’s Explorer Academy. Through the grueling training, I learned to work as part of a team. Appointed as Drill Instructor a year later, I took command of training the older recruits. Through a relationship of mutual respect, I prepared my platoon to dutifully serve the community. Leading this racially mixed group, I empathized beyond the duality of my own identity. I soon discovered that my heritage must transcend my personal struggles to truly embrace diversity.

Heritage is not a mere ethnic label—it is the honor and humanity that I am inspired to uphold. Today, I am grateful to my parents for endowing me with a spirit of dedication and determination. They bestowed a philosophy that speaks through my actions. This inheritance forms the base of my integrity as an individual, and defines my dedication to strengthening the society that I live in.

BEAUTY

People say that inner beauty matters more than outer beauty. But when I looked into the mirror and saw my face covered with unsightly blemishes, it was hard to tell myself that and believe it. By the time I entered high school, my acne had gotten worse, and my self-esteem was at an all-time low. So in the summer of ninth grade, I embarked on an unexpectedly difficult and emotionally trying quest for clear skin, an experience that culminated in one of my proudest achievements.

My typical daily diet consisted of sugary cereal for breakfast; salty turkey sandwiches, soda, and chips for lunch; a candy bar for snack; and rice and fried noodles for dinner. I never thought that my diet would be a cause of my acne, but the possibility first came to me when I was reading a skincare article. Desperate for a cure, I searched “clear skin diet” on the Internet. The websites that turned up all echoed the same message: a balanced and healthy diet is crucial for beautiful skin. The recommended foods listed included large portions of fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts, and fish; 8 glasses of water daily and only small amounts of high-sodium, high-fat, and high-sugar foods. I researched further and found out that the expensive chemical cleansers that I had been using were not the answer—gentle face washes and a coat of sunblock were inexpensive products that could reduce breakouts. I knew that changing my entire diet and skincare routine would require a tremendous amount of commitment and willpower. But determined to improve my skin and my self-confidence, I began to transform my lifestyle. I started by incorporating fruits and vegetables into my meals and replacing sugary cereal with whole grains, chips with carrots, and fried noodles with salmon. For a long, painful week, I stuck to this diet and restrained myself from any junk food. My skin condition changed gradually but substantially. By the end of the week, my skin was noticeably smoother, clearer, and brighter. Yet I found myself relapsing, unable to continue for long without indulging myself, unable to swallow the horribly plain salads and chewy carrots. Every time I stopped, the acne came back. It came to the point where I despised the acne and coveted the clear skin enough to force myself back on track. It became an excruciating pattern of cravings and self-restraint. I struggled with these two impulses until I became used to healthy eating, even enjoying it. Now, two years later, my skin is better than ever and I have never gone back to eating the way I had before.

I have no awards or medals to show for my particular achievement. But no academic distinction in the world can match what I gained from my experience with changing my diet: healthier skin, self-confidence, and newfound mental strength. Above all, I realized that by improving my outer appearance, I had enriched my inner appearance.

Envision High

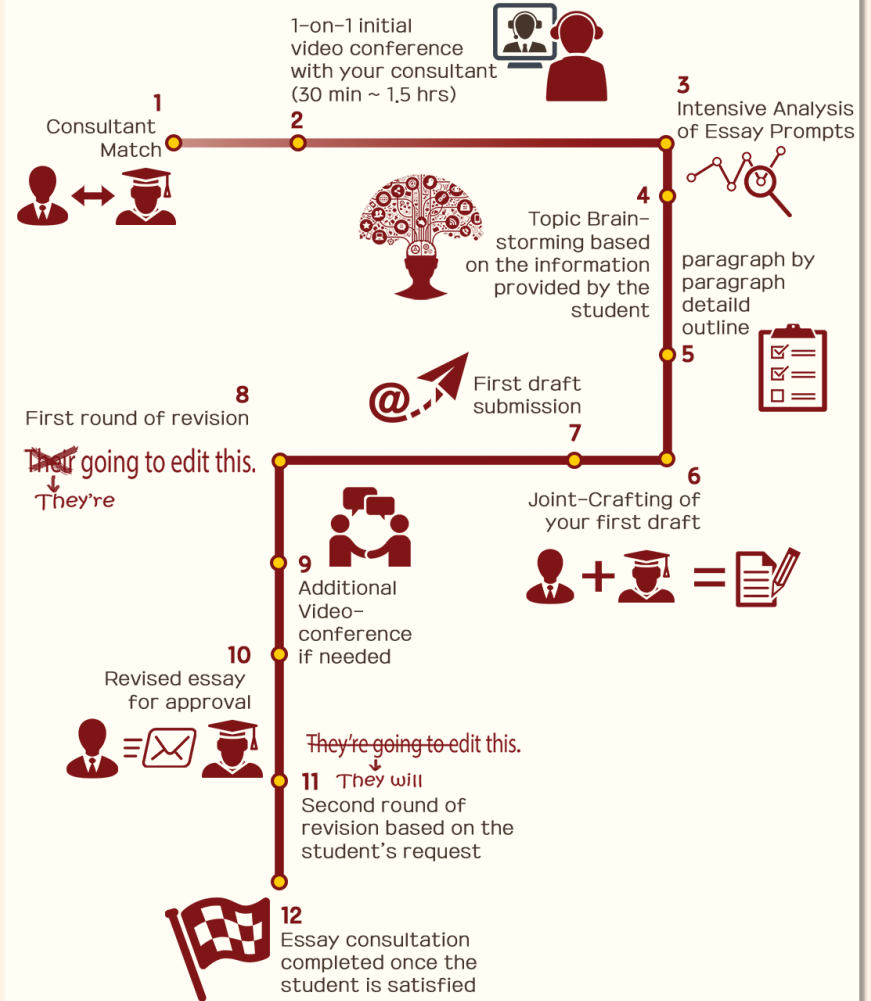
Intensive Essay Care Program



Don't know where to even start?

Envision High walk you throughout the entire writing process, from initial brainstorming to putting the finishing touches on your essay.

Program Procedure



10 School Package x10 \$ 4,000 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Application Essay • 10- School Supplemental Essay (All UC will be counted as one) • College list composition • Help with college research 	5 School Package x5 \$ 2,300 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Application Essay • 5 - School Supplemental Essay (All UC will be counted as one) • College list composition • Help with college research 	Supplemental Package x1 \$ 500 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 - School Supplemental Essay (All UC will be counted as one) • UC Essays excluded • Common App Essay excluded • Help with college research
Common App Package x1 \$ 600 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Application Essay • Extracurricular list help • Help with application fill-up • Supplemental Essays excluded • UC Essays excluded 	UC Application Package x∞ \$ 700 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My UC Application Essays (All UC will be counted as one) • Extracurricular list help • Help with application fill-up • Supplemental Essays excluded 	Apply Texas Package x3 \$ 700 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Apply Texas Essays included (Topic A • B • C • D • E) • Extracurricular list help • Help with application fill-up • Help with college research