Personal Statement – Sample Essay #1

PROMPT: Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.

I am an amazing person. If you could not read that, then just imagine if my voice was as small as those letters. I have always had a soft voice, but in the eighth grade, I learned that I couldn’t go around having people not able to hear me. That was when I decided to run for student council treasurer.

So when it came time to announce that I was running, I realized that I would have to speak loudly so my audience could hear me. I stepped onto the stage and up to the microphone and looked into the faces of hundreds of kids eating lunch, their faces stuffed with sandwiches and pizza. The roar of conversation quieted to a murmur with loud shushes from those who wished to listen. I was out of my comfort zone; I left my comfort zone back a month before when I grabbed a form for candidacy. I couldn’t win, I told myself, my opponent was Brett, the smartest kid in our class who had been a class representative two times before. And then I spoke “Hello, I’m Jeremy and I’m running for treasurer.” Not loud enough then I received half a dozen yells of “Speak up we can’t hear you,” which were promptly followed by another kind of shushing. Now was the moment, the time when I would have to be the loudest Jeremy I could be. I spoke again, at first a bit unsure of myself, “Hello, I’m Jeremy and I’m running for treasurer.” And I began my speech, my confidence was building as I went on. With my speech delivered, all I could do was wait.

The winners were announced in front of the whole school at the end of the spring talent show. The previous treasurer called me up to join the other winners of the election and the auditorium shook with an explosion of applause. I half expected it, and as I walked up I saw Brett give me a congratulatory smile and I wished that he had won. I later wrote that in his yearbook before we went to different high schools. But I was still glad that I had won because of all the experiences that I would have. Nicole, became the president, Heidi, the vice president, Maddie, the secretary, and Natalie was the activities commissioner; I was the only boy (yessss). As the student council, we held many student activities that previous student councils hadn’t done before: we made a team to go to Relay for Life, we held four dances instead of the usual three, we ran the magazine sale, and planned the activities for field day.

If there was one thing that I enjoyed most about being on the student council, it was not all the new experiences, but that I learned what it means to be a leader. A leader must take risks and strive to make the right decisions. For me that was first building up the courage to make sure my speech was heard, and secondly to put together new and fun activities. I did not pursue a traditional leadership role later in high school, but the traits of a leader have stuck with me. In group projects, I try to lead the group. And during presentations, which I still don’t like, I find the courage to stand up and present like I know what I’m talking about. So while I may have a quiet voice most of the time, behind that voice is a leader.

Comment [HM1]: Notice how the writer tries to engage you with smaller font and the “leading” last sentence of the intro.

Comment [HM2]: Note you can write in a more casual, storytelling manner, don’t worry about perfect transitions or using “I” statements, this is a more open format.

Comment [HM3]: He uses lots of words associated with sound to give the reader a clearer picture of what it was like, very smart!!

Comment [HM4]: He always brings the reader back to what he did, his accomplishments as a Treasurer, and his relationships with peers to show his character.

Comment [HM5]: He acknowledges his lack of leadership in high school which is okay because he concludes with how he grew as a person from this experience. Great closing sentence!!

Comment [HM6]: Student received $10,000 scholarship to attend Montana State University as an Engineering major.

Word Count = 586
I am an underground journalist.

I carry a tape recorder at all times and speak in short, clipped sentences laden with vocabulary. Where other girls my age never leave the house without mascara, I never leave without a notepad and a pen. I take notes when I’m expected to talk; I observe when I’m expected to participate. There are more gossip stories in my head then there is probably room for. Asking questions, to me, is a regular occurrence. Sometimes I forget how not to use shorthand and I struggle to write in full sentences. I am not in tune to the regular world of high school students yet, I find myself writing about high school students a million times more fascinating than my own.

Like I said, I am an underground journalist.

This means I read the news for hours on end; my fingertips are permanently stained gray from the slew of stories. My computer hasn’t been shut down for months; my email Inbox waits for updates from possible news sources. My phone will never be on silent; the ringtone awaits its chance via updates from fellow newspaper staff. I’m wired in every sense of the word—“in the know,” “have the scoop,” “got the inside story.” Yeah, that’s me.

So what is this newspaper? It is typically the question posed to me by University Place outsiders. I smile knowingly in response; the newspaper is what changed my motives, I reply. And it’s true. During the summer of my senior year, a group of like-minded, self-described “nerds” (my friends, incidentally) and I combined our efforts and founded the first, unofficial, completely independent student newspaper in University Place. Due to several complications that made it a difficulty to work through the school, we’ve got our very own student forum: free from censorship, free from administrative decisions, free from outside control. Free, free, free—that is what I believe speech should be. Students have just as much right to the First Amendment—so why not use it? In a single summer, the Viking Underground was established and its first 750 copies were printed.

There are about seven devoted staff members, including myself, who have no journalistic experience to speak of. It sounds relatively dangerous; I admit: a group of nerdy high schoolers running around with tape recorders and broad grins on their faces, reporting back to each other at an aptly named, “Secret Headquarters.” When critics stop to doubt our 17 and 18 year old abilities as writers, I remind them of the stories the Viking Underground has covered. I have personally spoken to the Executive Producer of MTV’s popular TV show, MADE, when auditions were held at our very own school, connecting the student body to the main media. The interview appeared alongside an investigative piece on the questionable judgment of junior high staff, revealing psychological implications of an activity gone awry. The News Tribune quoted the Viking Underground as a reference in uncovering a serious pyramid scam affecting hundreds on the West Coast.

However, when I find myself stressing out and jotting down “write newspaper article” under my neatly underlined “Homework” heading, I call for an emergency meeting of Undergrounders. We gather for a few hours of rousing renditions of karaoke and intense YouTube browsing to remind us that we’re still slightly odd, but thoroughly exceptional teenagers.

I’m not just an underground journalist. I kept that recorder in my pocket and notepad in hand, but I work for something bigger than information alone. The average student is blissfully unaware of not just his/her basic rights, but his/her own voice. I want more than to fill my peers with news stories; I want to give them a voice, inspire them to speak out on their own. I want to show people they don’t have to remain silent while life bustles by. This is not what makes me an underground journalist, but a free individual.

Word Count = 654
Personal Statement – Sample Essay #3

Those who know me best have always referred to me as somewhat of a “Mama’s Boy.” I agree, and I use this phrase endearingly. Growing up, my mom taught me cursive and long division, but more importantly, she instilled values in me which will prove more prosperous to my success as a person than any school subject. She always made me hold the door for women, including her. She showed me how to set the table, and how to behave once dinner has started. Just the other day I followed her advice when working on a project with a fairly disgruntled classmate: “No matter what, be nice to everyone. You never know what they’re going through.” And even though she passed away this past summer, I hope to relay some of the ways in which her life has shaped mine and why I am a better person because of her, even if I only scratch the surface.

To be honest, this application should represent both me and my mom with some sort of annotation. This is not to say that she stayed up all night and did my homework for me, but she would take the liberty of staying up all night with me just to make sure she could personally edit it because I was too tired. Almost every morning my sophomore year, she made me a peanut butter and jelly sandwich to eat before football practice, and almost everyday she brought it to me right after school because I would forget it in my backpack. This is the kind of woman she was, and this is the kind of mother she was. It is only now, after going through routine events without her, that I have been able to examine her mothering techniques objectively. My junior year I often got frustrated and even make a PB&J in the mornings so I would do it myself. I realize now that she had the foresight to keep me from relying on her too much, especially with the imminent challenge of college in my future. Because of my mother, I am responsible, a quality that serves me both in school, and in a variety of other aspects in my life. I have made myself a sandwich every morning this year.

When I was younger, my mom would always tell me, “I can’t wait until you can do this for yourself,” she definitely followed through. From a tender age she would periodically show me how to make a new meal for dinner and at some point along the way, she taught me to do laundry. She always told me my wife would thank her someday. I distinctly remember my fear of making dinner reservations for my first date, and her undaunted refusal to do it for me. Eventually, I made the call and I now pride myself on my ability to interact with adults and other professionals in situations like this. Albeit very bittersweet, I know now that my mom prepared me for a life without her, such as college, and I have found consolation in this knowledge. When I perform these seemingly ordinary tasks now, I see them as a small connection with my mom. They are individual, minute vessels of her legacy in me, and I am proud that she has prepared me so well.

Though she made my life so much easier by taking on her multitude of jobs as only a mother can, I miss my mom most for the comfort she brought and the advice she always gave me, whether I liked it or not. Yet as I attempt to restart my life, I sometimes see signs that she has not left me for good. I still set the table, I still stay up to edit my homework, and I still follow my life, I relish opportunities to demonstrate responsibility and maturity in real world environments. And while my mom was the single, largest influence on my life so far, I am grateful that she could give me so much in so little time, and I know her guidance will benefit me for the rest of my life.
Personal Statement – Sample Essay #4

PROMPT: A range of academic interests, personal perspectives, and life experience add much to the educational mix.

Throughout my life I have been pushed in the right direction by my Mom and Dad. They are both teachers, and therefore, are very focused on my education. Since the first day of kindergarten, my education has been my primary focus. It was never a question of whether or not I was going to college, but where. During my four years of high school, I have gone through some challenges that have helped me redefine who I really am. I have gained knowledge about what it takes to make it through these tough years and be successful in school. Now that I have achieved my goal, I want to share this knowledge with the next generation. I truly enjoy helping others that are in need, and this is reflected in my actions.

For the past three years, I have gone on a Church Mission trip to Mexico to help those who are less fortunate. I had to earn all of the money myself to fund this trip. I earned this money by doing yard work for people in my neighborhood. I also sold Christmas wreaths, cookies, washed dishes at church breakfasts, and other activities. Going on this trip was important to me because building houses was something that I had never done before. What I was doing was more than just building a house; I was making a home for a family to live in.

My first year on the mission trip we built houses for people who were basically living in makeshift shacks. After we completed the houses I felt a sense of accomplishment that I had never felt before. I will never forget the look on the faces of these families when they saw their new house. This feeling made me decide that I wanted to continue to go on this trip every year. The second year we went to an orphanage called Colina de Luz, and helped by doing various labor projects. I have learned to be grateful for all that I have based on my experiences in Mexico. When I returned from my first mission trip, I wanted to make a difference at my high school and an unexpected opportunity came along.

At the beginning of my junior year, the French teacher, Madame Curran, approached me with a request. She was adopting a new program at our high school called MAC Scholars (Minority Achievement Committee). This program connects high achieving African American males that are upper classmen with low achieving African American males to help them improve personally and academically. I agreed to take part in this program because I wanted to help break the stereotype that black males are gangsters, drug dealers, and dropouts have limited choices in life. I wanted to help young students better their lives and create a brighter future for themselves. This is my second year taking part in the program and we are working with a younger group of students to try and break their bad study habits before they become too engrained in their minds. We have discussed ways to improve their organizational skills that will help them in achieving effective time management. This program has helped me realize my strong study habits and time management and I want to use those to influence younger people.

My goal in life is to make a difference in other people’s lives. In college, I want to major in Psychology and become an adolescent Psychologist someday. I want to make a difference in people’s lives and help them become better people. As an Adolescent Psychologist, I will have the opportunity to directly influence other people. One day I want to have my own practice and work with adolescents to help them through the specific problems that they encounter as they transition into adulthood. My mother and father have been the greatest motivators in my life. They have helped me out when I needed help or when I felt down. Sometimes people need a boost to get back on their feet, and I want to be the helping hand that is reaching out when they look up.

Comment [HM1]: Focuses the essay on helping others, colleges love this!!
Comment [HM2]: He chose to focus on 2 activities he was involved in during high school to show his commitment. It is clear to the reader he dedicated many hours in these activities. This is better than talking about many things superficially so the reader can tell it is not very meaningful. Less is more if you can speak with more depth.
Comment [HM3]: He ties in all of his volunteer work with his future goals and uses his closing sentence to leave the reader with a strong image to support his theme.
Comment [HM4]: He attends UW Seattle and received the Husky Promise Scholarship. Freshman year paid for.

Word Count = 685
The summer before my junior year in high school a challenge was presented to me. This was an emotional challenge. The task itself had an effortless sound to it; all that was asked of me was to: “Be The One”. I was simply asked to “Be The One” to make a positive difference in anyway I knew how. This challenge was presented to 300 middle school kids and I as a resident counselor at a middle level leadership camp called Camp Columbia. This experience has changed my life and helped me develop to be the person I am today. For example, the theme “Be The One” was highly contagious among the camp delegates. To keep the interest high, a few resident counselors and I decided to create headbands with the saying “Be The One” bejeweled on them. The delegates loved them so much which is why I chose to volunteer and take time out of my summer to help these junior high school kids find the path to start making positive changes in their own lives and the lives of others.

“Be The One” can purely mean helping to promote basic leadership skills such as responsibility, integrity, flexibility, respect, and many other words that describe this passion of mine. My love for teaching has grown tremendously over the past two years due to this camp. I am determined now more than ever, to become a teacher because I believe that school is where leaders are made. It’s important that basic leadership values are impressed upon children at critical ages and it is often said that middle school or junior high could be viewed as those vital transitions years. Camp Columbia is an experience I will always cherish for the rest of my life. There is no doubt in my mind that the knowledge and skills that I gained at camp should be impressed upon anyone and everyone, but especially during their crucial junior high years. When I become a junior high teacher, that is exactly what I intend to do.

This theme “Be The One” has helped me determine what I want to do with the rest of my life, so I began to think a great deal about my future. When I entered my junior year of high school I decided to take classes that would lead me down the path to become a teacher. Child Psychology was a pre-requisite I needed in order to enter into the Teaching Academy my senior year. Additionally, I have been actively involved in Leadership classes since eighth grade and throughout my high school years. Taking these courses helped me gain the skills necessary to teach and lead a class of junior high students to “Be The One”, doing things as simple as showing respect when someone is talking, or being empathetic toward someone’s given situation.

To “Be The One” making positive changes in the lives of junior high school children, I need to continue my education and training. I want to be the best for the best. After completing my general education requirements at Western, I will apply for the Woodring Education program and plan to major in secondary education. Since teaching is something that I am very passionate about, I know that I will hold myself to high standards and try my best to excel in the program. I know that I can “Be The One” at Western because the values that I take from Camp Columbia every summer will always stay with me. I will “Be The One” for my students of the future, by showing them that compassion for people will take them far in life.
Personal Statement #6

Describe a unique experience that had an impact on you.

For the past two years, I have been fortunate enough to be able to volunteer in the medical tent for the Tacoma City Marathon through Multicare. This has made a huge impact on my career choice. I intend to pursue a career in Sports Medicine. As I have volunteered, I have been able to shadow other professionals working in the tent, and support the athletes as well. This last year when the first runner crossed the finish line, he was rushed into the tent. The runner had an extremely dangerous core temperature of 108 degrees Fahrenheit, which is a potentially lethal temperature for the human body. He was immediately put into an ice bath to help cool down his body and an IV was administered. Shortly after we treated him, an ambulance arrived and took him to the hospital. This man’s life was saved by our actions. I asked the doctor in charge of the tent if I could go to the finish line and assist runners that were in need of help and he allowed me to do so.

It was the first time I was given that much responsibility. When runners initially crossed the finish line, I was asking politely if they had any unusual pain or if they believed they were in need of medical help. Some runners did not respond to me. They ignored me and did not have confidence in me because of my age. By then, I realized that my behavior needed to be more confident in order to draw the attention of the runners. I needed to make the situation perfectly clear to them that if they felt uncomfortable or were in need of medical help, I was the person that could assist them. I learned to change my demeanor to put others at ease. Not only am I able to comfortably interact with adults, but I am able to read situations more accurately. It was then that I realized I want to be the person who is there when people need help, whether it is a simple ice pack for a muscle cramp, or a treatment for a life threatening emergency. My goal is to become an Orthopedic Physician's Assistant. In the two years I have studied Sports Medicine, I have continued to build on my knowledge of Anatomy and Physiology. Currently I have earned a B+ in A and P and I find this to be a challenging, yet rewarding class. I am able to understand the Physicians and other health care professionals while I shadow them treating patients, because of the knowledge I am gaining.

Another subject I have put to practical use is my Spanish speaking skills. I am in advanced placement Spanish this year and plan to successfully complete this course with high marks. I am learning to be bilingual in Spanish and now have a purpose and motivation for excelling in this course. I now envision myself becoming a bilingual Orthopedic Physician Assistant with the possibility of enrolling in “Doctors Without Borders”. I hope to practice in a Spanish speaking country and help underprivileged patients. I envision myself doing so every year of my career and I even plan to use your study abroad program to be in a Spanish speaking country for one full year of my college schooling.

I chose this university because your programs offer smaller classes compared with much larger universities. I have also researched, and toured your campus and believe that your university would provide me with a great opportunity to learn more and help me achieve my goals. I see myself being an excellent fit for your university because I carry tremendous determination to reach out and grasp the hand that crosses the finish line. And when I cross the finish line, I will be a reaching hand to help the runner behind me cross theirs.

Word Count= 650
June 18, 2010. That was the day I lost my mother, I was 16 years old. My mother suffered in the hospital for five long years with a terminal illness. This influenced me to make not only myself proud, but encourages me to impress her as well. After she passed, I lived with other family members moving from place to place over the last four years. Despite these struggles, I never dropped out of school, or even thought about giving up. Whenever I feel weak or helpless, I think of my mother and draw on memories of her for strength. My mother instilled independence within me and always said to NEVER DEPEND ON ANYONE. I believe that as I overcome these challenges, she is beside me, keeping me going.

Since the age of sixteen, I have been working two jobs to support myself while maintaining above a 3.0 GPA. I regularly work between 6 to 10 hours a day, and often stay up late completing homework. Frequently, I am tired and stressed from long hours but I force myself every day to wake up. My mother’s motivation inspires me to make her proud and I am gratified to do so. Despite my busy schedule, I have maintained solid grades and completed four Advanced Placement classes. I believe in challenging myself and I want to earn college credits faster. I am more confident because I know I can take on a challenge and manage my time properly. Responsibility is no stranger to me and I understand the value of being consistent and dependable. I am often complimented on how responsible I am at such a young age and I simply reply, “Don’t compliment me, compliment my mother.”

My dream is to attend a four year university and I am determined to make my dreams come true. I yearn for the day I am able to manage my own sports agency, and work in the field that I love. My entire life I’ve played sports, including: Basketball, Volleyball, and Track. I enjoyed them all, but Basketball was my primary focus. I stopped playing because of the workload I have taken on. I have always had a passion for athletics since I was a little girl. I want to blend my passion for sports with the professional skills I have obtained in the workplace. I want to be successful so my mother can look down on me and be proud. I want to rise above the challenges I have faced to help others face their own; so that they realize out of tragedy it is possible to find success.
I sat helplessly at an abandoned lake accompanied solely by a borrowed bike and a language no one understood. Hours earlier, my Austrian host brother led me off the main path and through a maze of wooden trails. We had finally reached the shores of Lake Ausee, and with swimtrunks already on, we hopped right in the water. A few kids drinking under the dock scurried away at the sound of our yelling.

The first week of my stay in Linz, Austria had been rocky to say the least. Although I had been to Europe as a tourist at the age of 12, complete immersion into another culture was a completely different experience. My host brother, Constantin Auersperg, stood a good foot and a half taller than me even though he was older by just a year. This discrepancy made us quite the team walking through the streets of Vienna, but didn’t help settle my nerves. When it was mealtime, however, aromas floating from the kitchen helped assuage me into my new home. Meals in the Auersperg household consisted of bratwurst, wiener schnitzel, and dumplings—all served in portions that made me loosen my gürtel (that’s “belt” in German) rather often. And even though Constantin and his parents knew some English, during mealtime, German was law. In fact, I was so oblivious to plans that one morning I woke up to the words: “We’re leaving for the Czech Republic in 15 minutes. Pack for three nights.” As a result of not understanding the everyday conversation of my family, I lived in a heightened state of spontaneity.

Putting aside our cultural differences, Constantin and I really started to hit it off. I began to settle into the European way of life, and became eager to learn more about the customs of the charming country of Austria. On one of our adventures, Constantin decided to take me on a journey (that turned into an odyssey) alongside the Danube River toward a nearby lake. Borrowing bikes from his garage, I rode his sister’s, which, to Constantin’s amusement, was still far too large for me. Nevertheless, we set out through the quaint streets of the borough of Ebelsburg and lazily cruised beside the swift Danube. At the lake, swans eclipsed by the tall grass appeared momentarily, before dashing away in fear of us boys in hot pursuit.

After our fill of riotous behavior for the day, I desperately needed to use the restroom. So when Constantin refused to wait for me, I thought he was joking. But upon return, my 6’8” host brother and his equally massive bike had vanished. So here I was, an American kid that knew as much German as I did Astrophysics, lost in Austria with a bike and sheer intuition at my disposal. I shrugged my shoulders, picked a direction, and tried not to think of my vulnerability. Anxiously awaiting me at the door two hours later, Mrs. Auersperg was relieved she hadn’t lost her “little American boy” that day.

Word Count = 500 Words
Up until about ninth grade I had thought Ginger was just a type of spice my mom used in her cooking. I never imagined it would be used as a word to describe myself. I had not even watched the South Park episode the name stemmed from, but apparently everyone else had and the term spread like wildfire (pun intended). Overnight I went from being just an ordinary girl to a Ginger. Turns out I was wrong about ginger being a spice too; it’s a root.

Over the years I fell in and out of the stereotype, trying to adapt to my changing surroundings as my goals and expectations shifted. At first I liked having something tangible to identify myself with; I had viewed myself as completely average and couldn’t see myself ever standing out in a crowd. Here is an opportunity for you to move into another way you stand out, talk about other strengths you have. Eventually I realized that while people seemed to be noticing me, the only thing they saw was my red hair and freckles. As much as this seemed like a curse, I figured how to work it towards my advantage through my interactions with people. Consider cutting the blue section and then let me know where you are at with word count. I think this is SO MUCH BETTER!! My hair starts conversations with all sorts of people, and once I learned to embrace this unique quality in myself I let my other qualities show: my roots and spices.

I love surprising people. It’s always fun to watch people’s expressions when I tell them my last name- a name that is obviously Hispanic. They look at me, with my fair skin and fiery hair, listen to my all-American accent, and try to find a polite way to ask if I’m really from Spain. When my Spanish teachers read my name on the first day of class, they always look excited to have a “native” in their presence, then look at me and have to double check that I am who I say I am. My Spanish roots have affected me in ways I never could have imagined. Learning Spanish in school has always been easy for me. The AP Spanish class at my school consists of only eight students, and my last name has generally given me the privilege of being the teacher’s pet. Most everyone who I have taken Spanish with knows of my trips to Europe and the traditional food my mom brings in to celebrate holidays. My Spanish heritage brings me back to my roots and reminds me that I am more than the color of my hair. Much better! I like this paragraph lots that is exactly what I hoped you would do with it.

I bait people with my Ginger qualities, hook them into conversation with my unexpected last name, and reel in their respect with the spices of my life. I am captain of the Varsity Lacrosse team, a sport not very well known on the West Coast. I played for an elite team in Seattle over the summer, which was an opportunity offered to only eighteen girls from my region. I’ve also been swimming competitively for most of my life, and recently placed thirteenth in my district for it. People generally associate my athleticism with being a “dumb jock”, but then I just happen to mention all the AP classes I’m taking. I somehow manage to balance three AP classes with two varsity sports and a job.

People judge others. It’s an undeniable fact of human nature. We categorize people into stereotypes based on their personality, activities, and the way they look. I am redefining those stereotypes. I am a Ginger, with Spanish roots and surprising spices. I am also a Ginger with roots, a
strong family heritage that values education. These qualities don’t define who I am, though, but what make me, me.

At first I didn’t mind this new term that I was now being called. I thought it was funny. On top of that it gave me something somewhat concrete to categorize myself as. I saw myself as completely average, and could never imagine standing out in a crowd. Being a Ginger made me feel unique, and it made people notice me. True, I had had red hair since the day I was born but I guess having a fun name to call me made people recognize me a bit more. I enjoyed the spotlight, and went along with the stereotype. I had braces and a face full of freckles at the time too, so I was practically the poster child to what I came to call “The Ginger Movement”. I began hanging out with other Gingers, and even dated a few, but it never worked out. Believe it or not there is actually quite a lot of tension in a room full of Gingers; we are all so used to being unique that it’s a bit of a surprise when we find out that we’re not.

I’m sure “Ginger” had been a derogatory term from the start, but I never really understood the insult until sophomore year. Having no soul was apparently a character trait of us Gingers, and this bothered me. I began to realize that being stereotyped for my hair color and the number of freckles on my skin couldn’t truly define who I was.

The summer leading into junior year I put blonde highlights in my hair, meaning I pretty much just dyed my hair blonde. People had told me for years not to dye my hair, and that people pay money to get the color I had for free, but I wanted to do it. I wanted to disown my Ginger-ness. I loved my new hair, and I thought it still looked somewhat red. I still don’t know if people actually liked it or if they were just being polite but I thought I looked so much better.

One day at work, a coworker referred to me as “Blondie”. My immediate response was “I’m not blonde, I’m a Ginger”, and that’s when it hit me. Changing my hair color does not change who I am. I still have more freckles than hair on my head, can still get sunburned on a cloudy Washington day, and am still socially awkward. I still liked my hair blonde, but felt almost ashamed that the reason I had dyed it was because I was embarrassed of my natural assets, and that I let a little bit of name calling affect me so much.

I am a Ginger and I am proud of it. Now, however, “Ginger” is not who I am, but what makes me, me.
Personal Statement #10

Prompt: Describe a challenge that you have overcome.

I was never much of a basketball player. I played when I was young, but it was never my favorite sport, nor one that I necessarily excelled at. So when my mom first told me that I was accepted to the Chris Dudley Basketball Camp, I was less than thrilled. This meant I would spend an entire week in Vernonia, Oregon away from my friends and family, who I had never left for more than a few days. When the first week of August rolled around, both apprehension and anger consumed me, as I slowly realized my summer would be plagued by what I had predetermined as a week of torture. After my mother dropped me off and I watched her drive away, I glanced at the kids that I would be spending the next week with. The first camper to approach me asked a question so simple, yet so unusual, that I was caught off guard. “Hi, when were you diagnosed?” The Chris Dudley Basketball Camp is different than most camps, because everyone there has a connection, a special bond that we all share: everyone has Type 1 Diabetes.

Chris Dudley played 16 years in the NBA as a diabetic, and in 1998 he formed the Chris Dudley Foundation, a group intended to improve the lives of diabetic youth. Additionally, he initiated the Chris Dudley Basketball Camp, an opportunity for diabetic adolescents to play basketball, while simultaneously learning how to live actively with their diabetes. Therefore, in the summer of 2009, 75 diabetics ages 10-17, myself included, attended this camp. That first week in August turned out to be a much better experience than I had anticipated; instead, it was a valuable one. I found that making friends was easy. I could look at anyone and recognize similar struggles. Knowing we had the same goal of overcoming them would form an instant bond between us. I could talk to anyone and everyone at the camp as if we were old friends. As the week progressed, it became less about our diabetes, and more about just being people. We were no longer 75 diabetics playing basketball, but 75 people just having a good time.

At the end of the week, we had a “campfire.” It wasn’t a literal fire, but an opportunity for anyone to share feelings, experiences or just thank everyone for the wonderful time they had that week. Tears were shed, hugs exchanged, and, as my first year drew to a close, I realized that we were a family. These people that were complete strangers to me a week prior had now become people I could confide in, people I was comfortable with, and I was completely unashamed of my diabetes. I was a part of this tightly knit community, a community that no one but the lucky few will ever understand.

Current counselor, and former camper, Tyler Byrne wrote a song that he played live when we are all gathered together, entitled “The Lucky Few.” I liked the song when I first heard it, but I didn’t understand its significance until a few days after I got home. The lyrics ran through my head all week, and what struck me most was the chorus: “as the hills roll down and the sun burns through, I know I’m one of the lucky few. One week in this place, not a lifetime can replace. Loneliness doesn’t sleep here.” I realized that week that what I had considered to be my greatest vice was actually one of my greatest virtues. I realized that my diabetes was actually a blessing, and I embraced and accepted it as a part of me. I realized that it could be much worse, and that even though I might not have the “perfect” life I had always dreamed of, I truly am one of the lucky few.

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