**Describe the most significant challenge you have faced and the steps you have taken to overcome this challenge. How has this challenge affected your academic achievement?**

My first anxiety attack is a recollection that is still vivid in my memory. After a stressful day at Disneyland with an intoxicated parent, I was attempting to fall asleep next to my mother. Looking out into the darkness, I began to imagine a great force was slinging up our hotel building, throwing it around above the skyline. I felt that I could sense the churning of the room and curtains around me, and for some reason, this thought held my brain like a vice and would not let go. I began to panic--chest tightening, breaths laboring, fingers buzzing--overwhelmed with sensations I had never felt before. It was almost as if my brain took the “what if” and transformed it into my reality, and I was living it. It was not until later in my life did I realize what was happening and what had caused it.

After much time analyzing my childhood anxiety attacks and their triggers through therapy and support, I found an obvious connection between times where I felt crippled by worry and times my mother was drinking heavily. I realized the sense of instability her obvious intoxication brought me and how that affected my general feelings of worry. The situations I was put into as a child that heightened my anxiety seem as if they are dreams when I think of them now, as if I can watch them through a third person perspective. I can see myself laid down across the car seats, trying desperately to ignore the swerving trajectory of the car and sleep with my mother at the wheel. This issue came to a head when my mother finally was pulled over by the police and charged with a DUI, thankfully without me in the vehicle. Now, after her recovery through AA, I still struggle with bouts of anxiety. They are likely something I will have to learn how to deal with for the rest of my life. However, these experiences have forced me to grow as an independent human being at an early stage, and have made me stronger and more capable on my own. My relationship with my mother is one that I cherish deeply, and although the anxiety is something I live with, I believe the skills I have obtained to control it and not let it get in the way of my everyday life are more valuable than the setbacks.