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?

As a child, I was inquisitive, moody and full of energy. I woke up every morning excited at the prospect of discovering something new or finding a solution to the numerous problems I believed would resolve major world crises. Sometimes, it was a mathematical problemthat I was determined to solve, other times it was a physical phenomenon that I simply had to understand.

Even in my dreams, I recollect seeing the colors of the rainbow, the shape of the moon, the lives of fishes living below the floating ice and the pinpricks of lights in the night sky. Supported by the nurturing environment at home, I believe my interest in science developed from this questioning attitude and the inquisitiveness to know everything.

The bedtime story routine every night inculcated in me the habit of reading. It also fired my imagination and exposed me to the wonders of the world –the earth and its geographical diversity, the habitats of animals, their survival and adaptability techniques, etc. This is probably how I developed my ever questioning temperament which I am convinced is also my greatest asset. Over the years, I have discovered the commitment required to keep learning something new every day and priceless benefits of the same.

I advanced quickly in my areas of interest in my junior grades. When my classmates were still struggling with basic algebra, I could handle detailed factors. As much as I enjoyed being at the top of the game, it also made me boorish, self-obsessed and over confident. But life has its ways of teaching lessons.

I learnt my first such lesson in grade five. My teachers encouraged me to take part in a regional competition for which I was to receive special mentoring along with a select few. I loved these special classes, to a large extent because of the new things I was learning everyday but also because it gave me the feeling of being special and entitled. And with each passing day, I grew convinced of my exclusiveness.

I was so sure of my capabilities that I wrapped myself in a cocoon of complacency which insulated me from ground reality. With my childish overconfidence, I ended up doing so badly that my teachers decided to exclude me from the school team and informed me about the change only on the day of the exam. It was so devastating for me to take the exam as an individual entry and not as part of the school team that I could not even complete the exam in time.

What followed were hours of contemplation on the injustice the world had done to me. I was shattered. It was difficult to accept that I had lost in an area that I was so good at.

That incident changed my life in many profound ways. Despite the debacle, I continued to believe in the greatness I was destined for. I stopped denying that I had made a mistake. With the support of my family, I went back to studying with the commitment I had before. If occasionally, the trauma of the failure surfaced, I pushed it back with force, instead envisioning on theeuphoria of success that would eventually be mine to cherish.

My greatest learning from the incident was that our mistakes are more valuable than our victories. I have learnt from my mistakes and moved on from them in such a manner that it has made me more determinedtowards my goals.

I still make mistakes. But I also try my best to incorporate the learnings from my mistakes and derive my satisfaction from striving to become better each day.