

Option #1 a.k.a. The Background Story:

Some students have a background or story that is so central to their identity that they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.

FIRST FREE WRITE

Last year in chemistry class in the beginning of the year the class was pretty difficult and I couldn't understand the material. It was the second test of the quarter and I felt pretty comfortable going into the test because I had studied for probably an hour and thought I knew everything well. However once I got into the test and it was put in front of me it freaked I don't know if I studied blank or if I studied the wrong material but it started to think oh my god I am going to fail this test. Then I remembered an exercise Peter had shown me the past week to relax your body and connect both the left and right side of your brain. Specifically, you take your thumb and pointer finger and put them onto your chest below your neck finding the part in between the bones of your chest and move them back and forth and then connect your breath to the movement. Which in turn relaxes your brain because it is a specific pressure point that connects to your nervous system with relaxes yourself and controls your heartbeat so you don't go into fighter flight mode. Once I started to do that during the test I began to relax and just focus on my breath and forgot about the test for a moment it was only about 25 seconds but after that I looked at the test with new eyes and was able to be more successful than I thought. Even though I don't remember the score I got on the test probably not very good, I think I would have done even worse if I didn't take that moment to relax think of the effortless way. The way the effortless way works if you are trying to find mind body harmony to playing tennis but it does not just connect to tennis. One of my coaches Saul is a singer-songwriter and he uses the effortless approach to singing and playing the guitar I am not sure how it works but I am comfortable saying it is probably very effective. Peter's philosophy and feeling toward life and the way each person should react to certain things on and off the court has affected my life deeply. I try every day to look at life with the effortless approach in the back of my mind. I strive to think through something difficult instead of reacting with anger. Whether I am playing tennis and miss a shot I think what did I do wrong or what should I have done differently instead of yell and creating more and more stress and unneeded pressure. Or in school if I don't understand something just take a deep breath and look at it again instead of instantly looking to the teacher or becoming frustrated with myself or others. The first day I ever went to play tennis with Peter was 3 years ago and the first when he started talking about breathing and we did a yoga stretching exercise before we played. I was like "what am I doing here, how is this going to make me better?" Before I was the kind of player that just suffered through pain or being winded pushing through no matter what. Then many 2 mins into hitting he looked at me and said "you look winded you should rest get some water." I denied that I was tired because I thought being tired showed weakness and I want to impress him and the other kids at the camp. I was rejecting what my body was saying. My head was saying keep playing, push through but Peter and my body were saying rest for a bit you need it. Eventually my thick-headed attitude of "I don't need rest" began to crumble. And the

effortless approach to tennis entered my mind and has more of an impact on my life than anyone could ever understand. Spending time of the court with Peter Saul, another coach, and Noah, Peter's son, is some of the greatest time spent in my whole life. I learn more about myself and tennis with Peter even if I am too tired to play and just sit on the bench. It is a different coaching style than any other I have ever been apart of. Specifically, the effortless approach shows you to look for other answers and to listen to your body and stay relaxed under pressure. For example, my car is a 1994 Saab, the super Saab as my family and friends call it. But this summer the battery was giving me trouble for the beginning of the summer. One time when I was leaving work and the car barely started I drove to the parking lot next to the snack bar because it was closer to where I had to clock out. I turned off the car clocked out and when I got back I was worried the car would not start. I turned the key and nothing. Then I turned back the key and just thought what should I do. Instead of getting angry and turning the key again and again hope the car would start when I knew after the first turn the car was dead. Then I very relaxed got out of the car looked around saw the head of the camp sitting in her car and asked her if I could have a jump. It was as simple as that. The effortless approach teaches you to stay relaxed because there is always an answer. Therefore you can use the effortless approach in any part of my life and insincerely try to do that. Sometimes I fail, I am not saying I am perfect. Actually the other times my car died I got angry but that last time I was relaxed. But for me the effortless approach is something to strive for and put into every breath I take, that is what Peter's philosophy is all about.

FINAL DRAFT

Most people learn how to breathe the moment they are born; I didn't truly learn how until the summer after my freshman year. I was lying on my back on the grass with my palms over my eyes so no light could enter. Peter was saying, "Find the space between your breath."

I didn't understand. How could I find the space? I wondered if it was easy for the other kids.

"Palming is like putting a period at the end of a sentence, so your learning is contained within a sentence in your life."

I couldn't stop thinking how ridiculous I must have looked; I just wanted to get on the court and start hitting.

Twenty minutes later, I was killing myself to make every shot. Point after point, I played at 100% to prove how hard working I was. I ignored the fact that my heart was pounding and that I was breathing faster than I ever had before.

As I smashed forehands and backhands, I heard Peter shout, "Focus on the breath."

My legs were tight; my muscles were trying to stop me from moving.

"Find mind body harmony," he implored.

What did that even mean? Why couldn't I just play tennis?

It's been three years since that thickheaded kid met Peter Rennert at his Peak Performance Training Program. Eventually, Peter's Effortless Approach opened a new

door in my mind, and I began viewing tennis in a constructive and relaxing way. All the stress and frustration of missing a shot was replaced by the motivation to find answers. *Why did I miss that? What did I do wrong?* When I was tense, I applied Peter's techniques. Inhaling as the ball came to me and exhaling as I hit it enabled me to stay relaxed on the court and win nail biter matches. Instead of exploding with frustration, I learned to release my stress in a controlled manner so I could progress in the effortless way. When I used the Effortless Approach in a USTA match, I was finally able to beat a bitter rival. Just a few deep breaths after a frustrating point would help me relax and get in the mindset for the next point.

The Effortless Way of finding mind body harmony didn't just connect to tennis but has also helped me in the classroom. My sophomore year, I went into a Chemistry test on Electronic Configurations thinking I had studied enough. I knew how to draw the electron configurations for simple atoms. However, once the test was in front of me, I blanked. My head was screaming and my right leg was shaking uncontrollably. Then I remembered an exercise Peter had taught me. I took my thumb and pointer finger, found the specific pressure point in between the bones of my chest, and moved my fingers back and forth. As I connected my breath to the movement, I relaxed and looked at the test with a new eye. The Effortless Approach also helps me cope with my challenges with reading. Taking deep breaths makes reading much easier than it used to be; the words on the page begin to flow, which allows me to comprehend more material. Using Peter's technique has helped me develop more confidence in my reading and has made me a more effective student.

Being effortless is not an action but a mindset that has truly affected my life. The approach has taught me to be a more constructive person who strives to think through difficult challenges instead of reacting with frustration. To many, the word effortless might mean slacking or lazy, but to me, effortless means being comfortable in my skin and knowing what I need to do to feel relaxed, confident, and in control of my life.