

Last licks of sunset snuck in the classroom and bounced off of the dark reflective surface of the grand piano, the melodic notes the only sound echoing through the halls. My fingers ached, but an audition for one of the best preparatory programs in the city awaited me. I was determined to ace it.

At thirteen years old, I was still considered a beginner on piano in the musical world. I was growing more nervous by the day, scared that I wouldn't be as good as the other players who had been playing since their fingers could reach the keys. I felt like a jumble of emotions, but it was mostly nervous excitement.

I had just finished playing the last note when my piano teacher, Teresa, passed by. Noticing me, her head popped into view by the door, so fast that her blonde hair almost fell out of its loopy bun. Mannes Prep was one of the programs her past students had gotten into and I did not want to be the one to fail. She looked at me and, in her Spanish accent, carelessly said, "You know, I don't think you are going to get in."

I stood there in astonishment. *Could my piano teacher, who usually encourages me, really be telling me this?* Then she smiled, "But it's good that you're trying."

All of my hope instantly turned to fear. Here I was, working hard and setting high goals for myself so I could at least make sure I had a decent audition prepared, and now one of the people I trusted the most to help me was telling me I could not achieve my goal.

Not knowing how to respond, I tried to play it off with a quick, cheery, albeit quivery, "Okay Teresa, See you next week!"

As I walked home I couldn't help thinking back to what Teresa had said. *Ehh, it's just another of the silly things that she says, I shouldn't worry much. But what if she's right?* For some reason, I couldn't brush it off. I couldn't help thinking that some part of what Teresa had said was true and that feeling of failure rushed through me like a tidal wave all over again.

Then it hit me. There would always be a "Teresa", someone discouraging me and I had to work harder because of it. From that moment on, I saw this audition with a different light. Not just an amazing opportunity, but as the beginning of my path to becoming a stronger person. I was motivated to show myself that failure was okay as long as I took a chance.

Being told you can't do something is usually one of the worst experiences a person can have. In my case, it wasn't. I was accepted to Mannes Prep and have spent the past three years growing as a piano player and a person. My mind is clear, my attitude is positive and I am no longer afraid of failure.