In order to be a critical thinker, one must be able to acknowledge and accept other parties' points of view. In addition to being able to acknowledge other viewpoints, a critical thinker must also be able to accept when they are wrong. I was given the opportunity to recognize my strong traits as a critical thinker as well as my uncritical thinker traits. In October, I believed that I possessed two main uncritical thinker traits: “Tend not to persevere when they encounter intellectual obstacles or difficulties” and “Lack awareness of own biases and preconceptions.” I have made very significant findings since then concerning my lack of growth regarding those two traits. Both my growth and the lack of growth of my two weakest traits each depended on my overall mindset and willingness to change.

First, I picked my two weakest traits, “Tend not to persevere when they encounter intellectual obstacles or difficulties” and “Lack awareness of own biases and preconceptions,” for several reasons, most specifically due to my current state in life. As I continue to overcome one of the hardest adversities of my life, I realize it is a constant battle. After overcoming one thing, I realized I had numerous physical, intellectual, and interpersonal battles to overcome. I specifically chose the trait referring to perseverance, as this is something that I had to learn quickly in regard to my life. I have been told, and I even recognized in myself that I tend to give up when faced with intellectual difficulty at school. I have always wanted to change that about
myself, and I knew I was capable of doing so because I was able to persevere through a traumatic health experience. I knew that I would be able to overcome anything academic once I was able to get over this specific intellectual challenge. I planned on improving this trait by first becoming aware of an intellectual adversity, then becoming more thoughtful and patient when deciding on a solution.

Secondly, I picked the trait of lack of awareness of my own biases and preconceptions due to various reasons. I feel as though this is a trait that society as a whole tends to possess, and I wanted to improve this trait as I knew it would help in all aspects of my life. I am aware that having biases and preconceptions can hinder one from experiencing things, learning valuable life lessons, and creating valuable relationships. I have realized that society has changed significantly since COVID-19 in a multitude of ways. Therefore, I have realized that it is critical to maintain an open mind and stay free of biases and preconceptions. I planned on improving this weak trait by being slower to jump to conclusions or biases on several topics and being more mindful of opposing viewpoints.

I kept a journal for about four weeks and learned about myself during that period of time. Not only do I attend school, but I also have a small business where I customize shoes, specifically Air Force ones. Right before my strokes, I started to get unmotivated, as having a small business can get overwhelming at times, but there were some new designs that I had been wanting to try and display on my business Instagram page. During the first week of my journal, I had been persistent with my studies and schoolwork, as I have always been serious about my education. I tried a difficult custom for the first time. It was scary, as I was truly taking a risk, and I even faced some hardships when trying the custom. On previous occasions, I simply gave
up and never tried the custom again. This time I was determined to at least finish the custom to understand the design, and I did just that. I did feel unmotivated at times throughout the process, but instead of getting frustrated, I followed through and completed the customs. This week was also one of the first weeks of the bombings and genocide happening in Gaza. At the time, I was simply unaware; I had my own views of what I deemed right and wrong. Yet, I was unaware of how touchy the topic is for many, and I quickly learned that I had my own preconceptions and biases.

In the second week of my journal, I recorded that it was my first math test. It was not the first math test for the class, but it was my first math test as I was unable to go to school for over a month. I had been trying my hardest to catch up and learn new material simultaneously. I wanted to give up while preparing for the test, but I soon realized how flexible my professor was. I was grateful for that and knew this was a blessing in addition to all of the hard work I had put in prior to the test. In the end, I was able to receive a high B on the test. The genocide in Gaza continued to bother me this week, yet I continued to learn about my own preconceptions and misconceptions. It was very hard to miss any information about the genocide on the internet and social media; therefore, I felt a way when I realized my friends and family were not spreading awareness like myself. I learned that there are many people who have their own private opinions and may be fearful of speaking on controversial topics as such. My journal continued to pertain to persevering in school and my shoes in totality. As well as recognizing the need to become aware and knowledgeable about all viewpoints in terms of controversial topics as such. This week, I have completed a total of three math tests, and I have two more left. As well as
completing two different versions of the custom I was previously scared to do. I have even received many orders since.

I believe that I improved my weak traits drastically in a short amount of time. I am aware that improving weak traits or learned habits is not an overnight process, and I will have to continue to put in work to see changes. However, I believe my weak traits significantly improved as I was able to persevere in my classes and even in my shoe business. Not only did I persevere, but I was able to see a win as I have received a high grade in all of my classes up to this point. I have also received shoe orders as I have not taken orders for a long period of time due to my health. In addition to improving my intellectual perseverance, I was able to improve my biased viewpoints as I became more aware of others' viewpoints and why they had specific stances on several topics. A win from this is that I have learned so much about others and understand why people think the way they do. This has also allowed me to be better at peace with many things.

I learned throughout this process that the biggest challenge I faced was myself. I learned that I am oftentimes my biggest critic, and this can be good or bad depending on the situation. However, it is bad more often than not. In addition to being my biggest critic, I realized that my own mindset or headspace can be a major challenge when trying to overcome adversity and improve weak traits. I learned that I have to remain patient with myself and show the same love to myself, that I always give to others. The only thing that I believe could have made this project better would have been to start it sooner, but I know that I can continue to journal and improve these traits for my own personal growth.