

*"Why don't you play with us?"*

As my friends played their day away outside, I stayed in and sat in my living room arranging my plastic pieces. I was considered an outcast, an introvert. My friends would stop inviting me to come play with them, since they knew I would simply reject and stay inside playing with my favorite plastic pieces. I was obsessed with toy cars. I loved taking trips to the local toy shop and picking out the shiniest, most colorful car I could find and adding them to my collection.

In my search for the perfect car, one gorgeous and extraordinary truck caught my eye; It was huge, green-colored, and had shining wheels. I fell in love with this truck, and I could barely contain my excitement. The way home felt like it took forever, but once I arrived home I opened the door furiously, sprinting to my collection. The car empire that I've started to build since the beginning was waiting for its long-awaited king. The truck finally completed the kingdom, and it became the head of it! It resembled a good leader and a source of inspiration to other toys, me included.

Facing problems makes communicating an impossibility, what if I make a mistake while speaking? People would laugh hysterically at me, I didn't even want to risk it, but when I hold my shiny new truck, all of these doubts and thoughts fade away and I start feeling the world's power in my very hands.

In a blue box sat my truck for many years. I was accepted into an enrichment program, and, following in my truck's footsteps, was selected to lead a team of students as part of my responsibilities to manage the graduation ceremony for the program. I was scared, uncertain of how the event was going to go. The night before the ceremony, I laid in my bed, hoping to sleep and forget these thoughts, but they soon overcame me. Will I do a good job leading my team? What strategies will I use? I rolled on my bed, flipping from one side to the other, until a gleam caught my eye from the partially opened box peeking from underneath my bed. It came from the truck sitting at the top, like kings on their thrones. An idea sparkled in my brain, and it enlightened me! Why don't I mirror my toy truck? The truck was a confident warrior, leader, and an example of what I wanted to be.

The important day came. It's time to be the truck of this team. I was doing the introduction and most of the short talks. Later, a conflict arose between two students and disturbed the whole backstage, which delayed the ceremony by 10 minutes. Both of the students wanted to do the conclusion. I looked back to when the truck and I faced the same issues with the car empire. We used to split the roles between cars, so both earned what they wanted, and the two students liked the idea. One problem stood between me and having the perfect ceremony, my confidence. It was the first time I experienced such a challenge, but I imagined the truck in my hand. I felt my inner power, and a part of me told me I could do it. So I revved my engine, filled my gas tank, and spoke, confidently this time. The ceremony went great: I won the war!

How did a piece of plastic made in Taiwan help me gain confidence? I realized that small things could be your gateway to success. A toy inspired me! It made me a strong leader and a great speaker. I no longer lacked confidence, and learned to face challenges head on, just like my truck.