



Hello! I am Esther Ong from 19SH05.

Before coming to NJ, I never thought I would be involved in science research. Yet looking back, it has been a significant part of my school life. I am very grateful to all my teachers for encouraging me to take up research, and for giving me the opportunity to work with institutions like A*STAR, NUS and even Waseda High School in Japan. The experience has not only honed my intellectual capacities but also taught me many essential life skills.

The research project that impacted me the most was my H3 research I did at A*STAR. Lessons in resilience, perseverance and determination were cultivated by the countless failed experiments. Even though H3 is an individual project, lessons in camaraderie were taught by staying back late to support those who had long, tedious experiments.

But perhaps the most memorable lesson I learnt was from my research mentor, Dr Niko. Given the nature of research, one is bound to make mistakes. But I made some significantly glaring mistakes. In June, I was quite new to the project and thus, rather clueless. When I was reviewing my research log in November, I realised that I had carried out all my experiments in June at the wrong pH! Disastrous. A month of wasted experiments. What do you do when you have so many failed experiments? You change the question they are supposed to answer. This wisdom stemmed from Dr Niko's favourite saying, "Use your results to tell the story". So one of my biggest lessons was to never view a mistake or a failure only as a failure -- you can learn something from every outcome.

To my juniors doing research, I hope you'll cherish this opportunity to learn not just about science, but also more about yourself. Be open-minded and make the most of the opportunities available to you. Take the chance to push your boundaries and step out of your comfort zone.

While it can be painful at times, nothing that is worth it ever comes easy. The grit that you'll learn by trying your best will definitely help you down the road.

Lastly, I'd like to thank all my teachers and friends who journeyed with me through my 6 years in NJ. While it has sadly come to an end, I know the experiences have shaped me to be a better person, and I will always cherish the memories we have together. Thank you!