

## How to Integrate Relationship Details into All 6 Prompts

Overcoming life's obstacles is a journey that doesn't just benefit you, but makes life better for others. If you are able to identify these connections (we'll call them "**Relationships**") and describe them in terms of giving and serving, you can harness the power of empathy in your scholarship essay.

### **First, be specific.**

Don't say that you have helped or served "the world" or "my community," because you cannot be in a practical relationship with such large groups. These are also clichés that will cause your essay to blend in with the rest of the submissions. **When you are specific, you are powerful.** By telling the story of one specific, meaningful relationship, you will build an image in your reader's mind that nurtures positive assumptions about your impact on your community and the world at-large.

### **Second, be thankful.**

It is extremely unlikely that you have been in a Relationship where you were 100% the giver or servant and received nothing in return. We always end up being served somehow in any relationship, even one when we seem to be "helping." **With this in mind, do not claim to have "helped" anyone.** This will come off as showy, or "humble bragging," and could turn your reader off to your story. Also, it's broad and bland. The power is (again) in being specific. To show that you've helped, describe the specific ways you joyfully gave and the surprising ways you received. No matter how much you might think you're giving more, you'll always receive something in a relationship, even if it is a hard lesson, humility, or a new perspective. Use this to your advantage in the essay.

### **In a nutshell, a Relationship is a two-way street, and you must represent this reality in your essay.**

Always include BOTH of the following in any relationship in your essay:

1. My sacrificial choices benefited him/her;
2. His/her choices, sacrificial or not, have benefited me (even indirectly).

Being able to express this nuanced reality of relationships will score you big points in the readers' minds, and show the depth of your growth and maturity in each story.

## Relationships in the 5 Story Elements

To integrate the Relationship into your essay, make a specific choice about WHERE he or she belongs in the story. In other words, what part of your journey was he or she an instrumental part of?

(The truth may be that he/she was involved in everything. But for the sake of the story, try to limit that involvement to 3 or fewer elements, otherwise your word count will explode.)

Here are the 5 elements of story in a scholarship essay, and how to connect the Relationship to each:

- **Goal:** The person wants the same thing (or a similar thing) that you do, and will benefit by your overcoming of the obstacle or achieving your goals, whether now or in the future. It is also possible to make the person a competitor (he/she wants something you want, and only one of you can have it), and you grow in such a way that you care more about the other person than your own victory.
- **Flaw:** Truly a centerpiece of authentic relationship, being honest about a flaw is a way to show maturity. Connect a Relationship to Flaw by briefly mentioning how your flaw has specifically affected another person. This adds stakes to the story and will make your recovery/transformation later even more emotionally powerful.
- **Choice:** Our choices inevitably affect others. Sometimes our choices require the help or compliance of others. This is where your story power will come from. If someone helped you make a choice (by encouraging you, teaching you, or making it alongside you), make sure you include it. This will show your willingness to accept help, teaching, and perspective, making you a very worthy team-player in the eyes of your readers.
- **Sacrifice:** Who has sacrificed so that you can benefit? This is perhaps the most powerful aspect of Relationship you can leverage. But do so wisely: Don't write 500 words about your mother or coach's suffering. Instead, capture small, specific details about what others have given up so that you can succeed, and immediately transition to how this has inspired you to make your own sacrifices. Be sure to express these sacrifices in tangible, measurable terms of what was sacrificed: money, time, security, relationships, other opportunities, etc.
- **Growth:** Since this is your essay, it must ultimately be about *your* growth. However, if it is highly relevant to proving that you are the ideal scholarship candidate, you can include details about another person's growth as well. This must be a person that your choices have *directly affected*. Otherwise, stick to your own growth, else you risk having your readers care more about the other person in the Relationship than they do about you.

