

Outlining Your Personal Essay

This is one way to outline the parts of your essay:

I wanted

I wanted it because (back story)

To get it, I , . . . (action)

But something got in my way: (there may be several actions/reactions sequences depending on length)

The turning point came when:

When that happened I realized:

Resolution: After that I ...

This person used the exercise to plan an essay on how she got into salsa dancing:

Problem: I wanted to go salsa dancing

I wanted it because

I was bored and alone and it seemed as good an idea as any.

To get it

I headed for a salsa club that was recommended by a hotel maid.

But some things got in the way

The cab driver did not want to drive to a Latino neighborhood, and once I got there the bartender at the club was hostile, and there were no empty chairs or tables.

So I

I went into the club anyway and asked one of the women who was seated with friends if I could use the empty chair.

But

I couldn't dance.

So

I told myself not to worry about it.

The turning point came when

An elderly man embraced me, danced with me, and I passionately connected with him. When the older man clasped my hand and started dancing with me. I realized that what I really wanted emotional and physical connection with a man and to be seen as desirable and seductive

resolution

I found the passion and caring that I was searching for in my life. I have been a salsa dancer ever since.

Your Outline:

I wanted

I wanted it because (back story)

To get it, I, (action—may several different ones)

The turning point came when

When that happened I realized

(Resolution) After that I ...

I wanted it because

To get it

But some things got in the way (there may be several actions/reactions sequences depending on length)

So I

But

So

The turning point came when

Resolution: I found...