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Common App Personal Statement Example

At seventeen, I started a funeral playlist.

Not because I was being edgy, but because it helped me process grief when my cousin Maya died unexpectedly. We were close, like weird sibling-close. She once dared me to eat a slice of pizza dipped in Sprite, and I did it just to see her laugh. When she was gone, it felt like the air in our house thickened. Words turned into silence. No one knew how to mourn out loud.

So I made a playlist.

The first song was one she loved, “River” by Leon Bridges. The second was one she’d have hated — my little rebellion. The rest were songs that carried the moods I couldn’t name: confusion, anger, strange moments of joy, guilt for those moments. Over time, I shared it with a few friends, and one of them shared their own playlist in return. It became a quiet ritual — music as confession, healing, connection.

This small act shifted something in me. I started volunteering at our local youth grief center. Not just to “give back,” but to understand how different people navigate loss. I met a ten-year-old who wouldn’t talk unless she was building with Legos. A teenage boy who cried only when no one was watching. I realized grief isn’t one big wave; it’s a thousand small tides.

Outside of that, I’m your usual contradiction: I love both spreadsheets and spoken word poetry. I enjoy debating whether AI is going to save us or make everything worse. I obsess over

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typography, play amateur chess (badly), and once rewired a broken espresso machine just for fun. But underneath all that, I'm a builder...of playlists, of safe spaces, of meaning.

As I apply to college, I'm looking for a place that sees students not just as GPAs or test scores, but as layered people who've carried and created stories. I hope to study psychology or sociology, with a minor in digital media. I want to understand human behavior deeply, then design solutions that feel less clinical and more human.

And no, I'm not planning my funeral anymore. These days, I make playlists for birthdays, study marathons, and my cat's many moods. But that early instinct, to curate feeling into form, is still with me. I think it always will be.