

College Common Application Personal Statement (Pre Medical Student)

Blink your eyes. In that time, roughly four babies were born worldwide. By the time you reach the end of this sentence, roughly twenty-five babies have come into this world. Childbearing is the most common and quintessentially human occurrence on Earth—it is how we all got here—and yet it is also truly extraordinary. A miracle, by definition, is an event that defies scientific explanation, so of course, giving birth is not one. However, having watched a live birth in its entirety, I understand why people often refer to newborn babies as miracles.

While volunteering in City X emergency room, I was able to observe a live birth in the department of obstetrics and gynecology. As someone with a passion for and interest in the health sciences, I welcomed the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the natural and medical processes involved in delivering a baby, and the experience exceeded my expectations. However, I was not prepared for the profoundly humbling impact the incident had on me and the indelible appreciation for the preciousness of life it left in me.

There is nothing that can fully prepare one for the experience of giving birth or witnessing a live birth, not even authentic photographs or videos. It was truly visceral, and when I close my eyes, all of my senses take me back. The room was both pristinely clean and blood-spattered. There were moments of almost shocking silence followed by the mother's blood-curdling screams and wails. All things considered, this birth was an "easy" one, which is to say that it was without major complications; however, everything about the process was still incredibly high-stakes. The baby's heart rate would drop, and a controlled panic would fall across the entire room. An endless team of individuals with bloody gloves and scrubs handed tools to one another with a speed that seemed unreal. More screaming. More checking vitals. More uncertainty. Time both sped up and slowed down; the whole process took hours but nothing ever stayed still.

For an incident centered around the ushering in of new life, I felt acutely aware of the possibility of death at all times. The fact is that birth is still dangerous, and to see it up close, one knows it. There is only one other place one will ever see that much blood, and it is in slasher films. After many intense hours, following a crescendo of the most intense writhing and cries, when I thought perhaps the mother would not make it (though the doctors assured us all she was just fine, that this was all normal), a tiny new life suddenly joined us in the room, its tiny cry echoing throughout.

I came away from that day not only with the highest regard for the medical professionals who come together to make the seemingly impossible happen but also ineffably humbled by the fragility and preciousness of life. There is a fine line between life and death, mortality and vitality, and I believe knowing this line makes living in the present essential. At the same time, I also saw humans as astonishingly resilient.

If a mother can give birth, living through arguably the hardest physical feat imaginable, what can't we do when we allow ourselves to be simultaneously our most humble and our most powerful? I return to this question often, mostly in times of transition or duress. Witnessing someone go to the edge of her very aliveness to achieve what certainly felt like a miracle has been the greatest lesson to date on the magnitude of the possibility and potential within me.