

I'm terrified. I'm absolutely terrified of the immense unknown that is, *life, after college*. And yet, I'm exhilarated. We, the Class of 2017, are standing on the greatest precipice of our lives to date. Ready to jump. Or not-so-ready. These past four years at the University of Miami have completely changed us all. And the biggest changes came not in the classroom but in *life*. I have taken much from my undergraduate education, but the two most important lessons came regarding the concepts of *uncertainty* and *happiness*.

As we all enter the very clearly delineated next stage of our lives, a great deal of uncertainty abounds. We all know the student who has planned every stage of his or her life out for the next 20 years. You may be sitting next to one. If not, you may be one. But, try as we may to plan our lives out, step-by-step, uncertainty is an unavoidable fact of life. It's rather central to it. It's with us the moment we're born and the moment we die. However, we engage in a constant struggle to confront and accept it. The uncertainty of tomorrow upsets the tranquility of today.

How often is it that we count down the days to the next milestone of life? Four weeks until I get my braces off. Nine years until my retirement. Some of us are guilty of it even for today! How many of us counted down the days to our own graduation? Too often we look forward, promising ourselves that maybe we'll be happy in the future in order to justify the unhappiness of the present. And now that leads us to *happiness*.

I have done no small amount of wondering and wandering about happiness. So often is it described as a *pursuit*. Something to be captured in the future – as if it cannot be experienced in whatever situation in which we currently find ourselves. It doesn't have to be a pursuit. I've lived with my current roommate since freshman year and, we've developed a motto we always lean back on when it feels as if the metaphorical house is burning down around us: *Nothing bad has ever happened to anyone; anywhere; ever*.

Now, obviously bad things do happen every day all over the world, but the mindset is what is important. The mindset has enabled the success of the last four years. It's what's gotten all the students here today through the last four years so successfully, and all the parents through the last forty. Frame of mind determines our reality. We as humans develop a lens through which we interpret each and every life experience. This lens, I believe, is the crux that determines our states of being, and, by extension, our states of happiness.

We keep ourselves – either consciously or unconsciously – in a cage. And oftentimes all we have to do in order to go out and enjoy life is to give ourselves *permission* to leave the confines of our cage. We get stuck in the bounds of the boxes in which we keep ourselves with the rationalization that this is just what life is like – that we're condemned to being content with being discontented. Our thoughts are confined to these artificial walls that we build within our subconscious. These walls must be torn down in order to unlock the quintessence of our lives.

On a day like today, I think it is important for us all to think about whether we are living life below what we deserve. Below what we want. So today I challenge us all to examine our lives. Do we let every shortcoming, every pitfall, ruin our days? Or do we treat each day as if it were our last? These last four years have taught me that not only can you smile through pain, but that pain, sadness, and defeat are all integral parts of life. Life is a complete whole, we don't get to

pick and choose what experiences we have. Yes, I'll have happiness with a side of success and laughter. No. It doesn't work that way. It wouldn't be a life truly lived if it worked that way.

We do not possess the ability to turn back time, nor do we have the ability to pause time. That is precisely why we must make the most of each and every moment. Each life is a unique assemblage of millions of moments. In these moments we find the gamut of human emotion. Each a necessary part of life, for there is no true living if one does not learn how to appreciate the splendors of the good moments through the drudgeries of the not-so-good ones. Everyone here today knows personal pain. Tragedies befall all of us. We all know what it is to be defeated. What we don't always recognize, however, is the opportunity in defeat for making a life worth living. There is a time and place for all emotions, but if you choose to approach your life with a certain vigor, a vigor that you *will* be happy, that you *will* be successful. Then you *will* get to wherever you want to go so long as you have the mindset that you're already happy. You're already successful. You're already wherever you want to be, and the only thing between you and doing what you want to do is *doing it*.

And so here we are, college graduates. The biggest challenge I've had at this university has been *not to wish my life away*. I'm the guilty student counting down the days to every big event and promising myself that happiness is something to be attained in the ill-defined future. But what I have come to appreciate rather recently is that life, is in the *every day*. That truly living involves experiencing and appreciating each moment as it is uniquely delivered to us. Today will be remembered by most everyone here for a very long time. Much fewer, however, will remember what we do tomorrow or the next day. But those too, are days in which we can fully celebrate the gift that is life. Let us cherish each day that is given to us all and be thankful for the colorful cast of characters that feature prominently in these, the stories of our lives. While the road ahead is uncertain, may we all approach the next part of life with minds that *wonder* and hearts that *wander*. I'd like to thank the University of Miami, I'd like to thank all of you, and I wish the Class of 2017 lives full of meaningful moments. *Love you, Go Canes*.