

What's up class of 2019? You guys feeling good? You should be.

My name is Ryan Gershman, class of 2004.

Today is a very special day for you but it is also a special day for me. My oldest nephew, Gavin is in your class. I remember the day that he was born and to watch him mature into the man he is today and be here speaking at his graduation is a real honor. Congrats, Gavin.

I attended Park Tudor for 14 years from JK through High School. I wore those ridiculous uniforms in lower school. The first girl I ever asked out was by the lockers in the middle school. Our relationship lasted 2 days; she broke up with me over aol chat. I hung out in the same wood room in high school. I ate those fried chicken sandwiches day in and day out in the commons. I attended countless field trips, sporting events, carnivals, festivals and leadership retreats. And approximately 15 years ago to the day, I sat in this same church and graduated from Park Tudor. Essentially, I am you in 15 years.

So as I thought about what to say to you all here today, at your senior breakfast a few days ago, I asked Mr. Fumusa if he had any advice. His advice was to focus on one thing; one thing and not a list. This advice took me back to essentially rip up the speech I had written and to start over. What do I wish I understood better 15 years ago? So if I can offer one piece of advice and try to convince you of one thing it would be this:

BE PATIENT

The definition of patience is as following:

“The quality of being patient, as the bearing of provocation, annoyance, misfortune, or pain without complaint, loss of temper, irritation, or the like”

“an ability or willingness to suppress restlessness or annoyance when confronted with delay”

“quiet, steady perseverance; even tempered care; diligence”

Many good things, probably the best things in life take time. Your patience will be tested every single day. In probably every single way. Family, friends, strangers, business, politics, education, your Starbucks mobile order not being ready when you get there.

Now do not confuse this with complacency. Or take this to mean you should not be aggressive, you totally should be. But do it in a focused, rational, thoughtful way.

You guys have grown up in an era of instant gratification with social media, Amazon and high-powered computers in your pockets. However, there will be people that do not return your phone calls, do not return your emails and in some cases not even take you seriously. Be patient and use this to your advantage.

Have you ever heard of someone losing their patience or going off the handle and it leading to a positive outcome? In fact, it's probably the opposite. The loss of patience will likely lead to an embarrassing situation and be counter-productive. Trust me, I have been there.

And Don't take it from me....Bill Gates said “Patience is a key element of success”. Pretty smart guy. Gandhi said “To lose patience is to lose the battle”

Now, I am far from perfect when it comes to my own patience.

So I'll tell you a quick recent story. I have a 6-month-old daughter and last weekend my wife assigned me the job of putting together and packing up a “pack and play”. A pack and play is basically a crib you can take with you on the road and easy for travel. So I took out the instruction booklet and went to work. I gave it a solid 20 minute focused effort. Nothing was clicking into place, nothing was lining up, zippers didn't match up, couldn't even get one leg to unfold. So as my frustration mounted and blood began to simmer, I realized that I had the instruction manual to an entirely different child contraption. The OTHER pack and play that we apparently own. Simmer became a boil and...

WHOOSH!!!!

I flung that instructional booklet clear across my living room....You could hear the pages flapping in the wind. I totally lost my cool.

So now if you take a step back and analyze this ridiculous situation where I lost my patience, what did I gain? Absolutely nothing. I still had to put together the right contraption, my blood pressure undoubtedly spiked and I had wasted probably 10 minutes having a little spaz when I could have been refocusing my efforts to solve the problem. It's a total waste of time.

I want you to view this story as a symbol for what not to do as you deal with frustrating situations that you will face in the future. I lost that battle. If you look at it objectively, it makes a lot more sense had I just remained calm, problem solved and completed the inevitable.

What I wish for you all is the ability to have the self-awareness to focus on yourself, be honest and strive to improve every day. It is no different than practicing a sport or an instrument, so to must you practice on yourself and always seek improvement. This is a long game and it takes constant work. I promise if you put in the work now to be able to calmly deal with life's daily intricacies, you will have a leg up and your patience will lead to opportunities.

It took me a long time to realize that Park Tudor helped lay the foundation to be the best version of myself. Park Tudor taught me that you need to put in the work and be patient. So to bring this full circle, class of 2019, many of the people in this room...your PT community...your parents, teachers and staff have spent years being patient with you. Now it is your turn to go out, be patient and be the best versions of yourself.

On behalf of the Park Tudor alumni community, it is my honor to be one of the very first to congratulate you on your graduation and welcome you to the PT Family. Good Luck.