

When Being Wrong is Right

Graduation Remarks
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From the moment you were born, you have been making mistakes – and *that* is a **good** thing.

Think back to when you were an infant (you may not remember, but your families do). You start off making lots of mistakes – the early sounds you try to make are not words at all, the early steps you try to take end up with one fall after another, and even learning to use the bathroom, as parents know all too well, isn't something that babies are born knowing how to do. Learning how to do something depends on trying over and over again, getting it **wrong many** times, until you gradually learn how to do it better and better. And so, you learn to talk, walk, and even use the bathroom correctly.

So, it turns out that the way we think about learning and school is backwards. Unfortunately, we are often so focused on being right that when we make a mistake we feel a sense of failure and embarrassment, and perhaps sometimes we even give up. We fail often - lots and lots of times - with things we are trying to learn. Whether it is kicking a soccer ball, doing math, playing the violin, hitting a baseball, figuring how to do magic tricks, driving a car, throwing a spiral, or learning a new language – we get it wrong many times before we shape what we can do and get better and better at it.

It is important that each one of you works to change the way you think about being wrong. We need to **celebrate effort** at least as much (if not more) than ultimately being right. It is your effort - your **tenacity or grit** - that determines how well you will succeed at whatever you do.

There are missteps and mistakes for all of us, and each one of those times when we stumble is an opportunity to learn and grow and improve on our journeys. Gabby Giffords recently said: “**We all deal with set-backs. What matters is how you respond.**” This life lesson may be the most important thing we teach you – and it determines what you do if you fail a test, get cut from a sports team, lose your job, don't get the lead in the school play, or fall off a bike, or give up when trying to finish a marathon. Do you have the **resilience** and **grit** to study more and do better on the next test? To practice harder to try to make the team? To go after another job? To work hard as a cast member even when you aren't the lead? And to get back on that bike? As you know, I have completed a marathon, (several) and what I learned is that it is easy to think of reasons to stop running along the way. It is harder, *but more rewarding*, to keep going, keep moving forward, to push yourself to keep trying and have that inner **grit and determination** to finish. It is your willingness to try something over and over again to improve and do better that is the greatest predictor of success over the course of your lifetime in whatever you choose to do.

The truth is, it isn't always a smooth process. All of us are works in progress – you never stop growing and learning in your journeys in life. Will you show the **grit** you need to do well and to succeed?