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February 21, 2011

I did as much of this speech as I could impromptu. I avoided writing it word for word because I wanted the words to come from my heart. The speech was organized around five points, and I spoke spontaneously about each point. Also, I tried to find good quotes to accompany each point. Below are my main ideas about each of the five points.

1) You can change your reality if you change your thoughts:

Dhammapada “What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday, and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow: our life is the creation of our mind”—Shakespeare echoes this in Hamlet “Nothing is either good or bad but thinking makes it so”

Reality is subjective—change thoughts patterns and you will change your brain.

Meditation gurus talk about stepping back and observing your thoughts dispassionately—Try this: when you catch yourself falling into cycles of negative thinking—step into a dispassionate place and simply watch your thoughts—from this place, actively break cycles of negative thinking and cultivate positive thoughts.

2) Maintaining a grateful attitude is one of the most important ingredients in happiness:

There is a Hindu monk who said: “the only prayer you need to know is ‘Thank you’”—There is always beauty to give thanks for.

Grateful attitudes leads to mindfulness—if you allow yourself to be content—you will stop worrying about the past or future—actively cultivate a sense of divine gratefulness and you will stay in the present.

Another beneficial practice: find 3 blessings in your life each day and consciously give thanks: to the universe, God, whatever—give thanks for anything beautiful you encounter—friends, family, random acts of kindness— this will change your consciousness.

3) View all as spiritual brothers and sisters/shrink ego:

Difficult in this environment—many people here at Harvard are used to being the best—culture of hyper-achievers.

But achievement is an illusion—there will always be people better than you and worse than you in any area—so don't become vain or bitter about your achievements.

Love/unity is more important than achievement

Minister in my high school had spent extensive time with people before death: the amount of love in their hearts and how much love they shared throughout their lives is really all they cared about.

Ego hinders me in two major ways: we learn less and we love less.

Chinese sage: "Who do the wise learn from? All people." Be humble enough to accept that every person can teach you something—you will open yourself to infinite wisdom.

Gratifying the ego, comparing yourself against others creates separation: a more important goal is to see yourself in others.

Instead of viewing life as a competition—view as a sublime journey that all us are participating in together.

Exercise from high school English teacher: "look at your hand—realize that one day that will be hand of a corpse", likewise everybody you know will one day die.

5) Surrender all emotional garbage to a high power:

Have faith that ultimately everything will work out the way it should—even if it is completely incomprehensible to you. Truly religious people have a calm and serene demeanor because they have faith that ultimately everything will be as it should be.