

Mrs. Lee Shu Hwei, school directress, members of the Board of Trustees, Ms. Marissa Ayson, school principal, Ms. Liezyl Tamayo, APAA, Ms. Janet Ty, APSAF, proud parents, and dear graduates, good mornig.

Thank you for having me here today. It's such a special honor to speak at a graduation that when Ms. Ayson called with the invitation about a month ago, I immediately said yes. And it's for that exact same reason that not 5 minutes after hanging up, I thought of calling her back to cancel the speaking engagement.

For really, what does one say at a graduation speech? Almost always, it aims to answer some form of the question—"What is the secret to a happy and successful life?" Talking about it in front of young, intelligent, impressionable people is a daunting task. On the one hand, it's scary that what I say will impact you differently from how I intended, and on the other hand it is terrifying that you might not remember a single word I say.

In the weeks that followed Ms. Ayson's phone call, I had a work emergency, a surprise visit from family abroad, and a bout with the flu—any one of which could have derailed my coming here. And yet here I am. Which brings me to my message— **at any given point in time, you are exactly where you are supposed to be.**

There's a certain power in knowing that there are no coincidences in life, because it means that when you find out where and who you're meant to be, the universe conspires to bring you there.

To make this life journey meaningful and complete, you need to know three things—where you're meant to go, how you will get there, and why you'd want to go in the first place.

This last one, to me, is the most important, so let me start with it. You need to find what Simon Sinek calls your "emotional why" to begin your journey. Find your emotional why, and the who, what, when, where, and how will follow. It comes by many names—driving force, the fire that burns within, your inspiration. It's what gets you up in the morning and what gets you going through the worst of day. **It's what makes you want to be successful.**

There's no doubt that you are all here today because you worked hard for that diploma. But I bet that most of you worked hard to get here because you want to make your parents proud. Because you see the sacrifices they make to give you a good education. Because you never want to disappoint the people you love the most.

Find your emotional why, because when you fail, and at some point you will, you need to look back at why you began the journey in the first place. And it will give you strength to get up and keep walking.

I think it's true what they say that the 2 most significant days of your life are the day you were born and the day you figure out why. Three years ago, when I held my son for the very first time, I figured out my emotional why. He is the reason I work harder than I ever have in my life, to build a company that is not only profitable, but also charitable. He is the reason I chose to change my lifestyle to take care of my health and well-being. He is the reason I strive to be a better

person, every day. And he is the reason why I will never stop believing that every Filipino child deserves quality education, and a better life.

It's natural to strive for success for the sake of our family. At some point, though, I hope you'll find it in your heart to seek success for the sake of something bigger, whether it's your community, our country, or the world. Right now, the world needs more people, who care enough for the common good. When you reach this point in your journey is when the magic in your life truly begins.

When you find the reason to start your journey, the next question is, **how do you plan to reach your destination?** Allow me to offer a few suggestions.

First, work hard, because there is simply no substitute for hard work. But also, work smart.

In recent studies, brain psychologists discovered that, as a matter of fact, multitasking is NOT a thing. It is not possible for the human brain to process several tasks at the same time. What millennials refer to as multitasking is the brain shifting from one thing to another. As it does, it needs to reset every time the object of attention shifts, and thus requires more time and effort to accomplish a very small part of each task.

I realize that I'm saying this to a generation that does homework while sending an email, texting a friend, and checking their Facebook news feed, all at the same time, but bear with me. What if multitasking really is a myth? How much faster would you have been able to do that book report if you hadn't paused to check you Instagram every half hour? Even in the workplace, more and more people are reporting burnout and fatigue, while never having enough time to do everything. Could this myth be the reason for the pandemic we call busyness? I guess we'll never know, unless we try to do away with it.

Second, work with people, not objects.

If I ask you right now, what was the best school day you've had in your stay here at PIQC? I doubt that the answer would be the time you got a perfect score in a quiz, or the time you performed well in recitation. I bet it would be the time you pulled an all-nighter with your groupmates in a class to finish a project, or stayed late with your committee to organize an event. I bet you think of that time not because it was easy, but because you overcame the hardship together. As humans, we are social beings who thrive in building relationships for a common goal. When we think about what makes us happy, our instinct prompts us to think about relationships more than individual achievement.

You are now entering a stage in your life where this is particularly relevant. You are at an age where you start to look for interaction with people outside the immediate family. I'm sorry, dear parents, but not only is this inevitable, it is actually a great thing. Your children are about to learn the life skill of turning to another human being in times of trouble.

This is the reason why alcohol isn't recommended for this particular age group. Because alcohol hits their blood stream faster and stronger than that of an older person, the effects are also felt faster and. You actually get the same "high" from unloading your problem to a friend or guardian, but it will take more time. And for a generation born into a world of instant gratification, the temptation to turn to alcohol or other substances instead of another person is very real. **Let us not wait for this to happen.** You have something on your mind? TALK to people—family, teachers, and friends. TALK to people you meet for the first time and get to know their story. Parents, TALK to your children about more than where they are and what time they'll be home. Ask them how their day went. Get to know what's on their minds and in their hearts.

Social media is an amazing, life-changing innovation, but it can never take the place of face-to-face interaction. Build relationships with people, not with avatars. Know that you are not defined by the number of likes you get or the number of followers you have.

Cherish the real, lifelong friendships you have built with the people sitting around you today. Build more friendships in high school, college, and as you enter the workforce. Build networks with people near or far. Make friends with people who are different than you. Seek out people you can learn something from. They say you are the average of the 5 people you spend the most time with. When you do the Math, I hope you end up in a good place.

Third, build and maintain integrity.

A few months ago, I let go of one of our office staff, who fell asleep while on duty at the front desk. When my mom heard about it, she said, "Isn't that a bit too harsh? I mean, the poor girl just fell asleep!"

I said, "Oh no, I have no problem with her falling asleep on the job. But when I asked her if she did fall asleep, she said no. When I asked her again, she denied it again. When I showed her footage from a CCTV camera that we had installed in a hidden place, she still tried to deny it, until she realized she was caught red handed. The sad thing is that if she had just admitted her mistake, the only thing she would have heard from me was "Why did you fall asleep? Are you not feeling well? Is everything at home ok? May problem aka ba? Pano ako makakatulong?" I really only wanted to help her.

You see, as a student, teacher, or employer, it is very hard to work with someone you know you can't fully trust. The funny thing about integrity though, is that you only know if it's there when it's being tested. Dear graduates, I hope you pass this test every single time. Being a person of integrity is crucial if you want to be part of progress and positive change. If you dream to pursue a medical career, integrity can be a matter of life and death. When you're an employee, integrity means you could be trusted with money and data. If you choose to work in government, well, don't even get me started on how much we need people of integrity there right now.

The last question you need to answer is, **where do you want to go?** PIQC Class of 2018, what do you want to be when you grow up? I ask my son this question, and his answer changes every 40 minutes. If you change your answer every so often too, that's fine. Keep dreaming about it.

Keep praying for guidance. Know yourself. And if you still can't find an answer, take inspiration from your alma mater. I heard that PIQC is a place where GIANTS are formed. **Be a giant.** Dream big, and know that you are big enough to accomplish that dream. There is nothing wrong with dreaming simply, but why stop there? I invite you to dream bigger. You already have the tools you need to go for it—you have practically unlimited access to information and research, you can connect with the world with a touch of your finger, and you are more socially aware than past generations. So why not go for it?

Why not try to stop climate change?

Why not try to find a cure for cancer?

Why not find ways to get millions of our fellow Filipinos out of poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy?

Why not be a bigger blessing to more people?

I cannot overemphasize the value of wanting to be a blessing to each other.

In our tutorial center, we ask our students, "How were you a blessing today?"

I'd like to share some of their answers with you.

"I bought 2 orders of potato corner, so I can give one to Kuya Rene (his driver)."

"I lowered the volume of my radio so my brother can rest."

But there are also students who say...

"Teach, can I try again tomorrow?"

"Teach, I'm not a grownup yet! How can I be a blessing?"

"Teach, what is a blessing?"

Being a blessing is not rocket science. It doesn't always have to involve big actions or major decisions. A little bit of kindness really does go a long way. If you don't remember anything else I say this morning, remember this: If every day you ask yourself "How can I be a blessing to someone today?" and do something about it, then **you have already unlocked the secret to a happy and successful life.**

So dear graduates, my hope for you on this momentous day is that you'll be able to find the emotional why for your life's journey. I hope you will get there by working hard and being a person of integrity. I hope you are blessed with healthy, loving relationships. I hope you find the courage to dream big and make it happen. **And I hope that the universe conspires to make all your dreams come true.** Congratulations and have a great journey!