

As I stand before you all today, I begin to reflect upon my years in High School. I think about everything it took from my fellow students and I, to get to this point, and what it took from me to earn the right to give this speech. Yet one thought stands out among the rest. Despite the overwhelming amount of joy I receive in being able to deliver this speech and wear the honor of Valedictorian, I find myself unable to shake a certain feeling; although I have worked tirelessly to get here, and I know that I have, I still feel undeserving of this honor. I would like to delve deeper into these emotions and hopefully come to an understanding about them, and with luck, prove to everyone and myself that this feeling is just that, a feeling, not a concrete barrier impeding the achievement of greatness.

For as long as I can clearly remember, I have always felt insecure about myself, about my place in the world, that I did not fit amongst others, always seeming to be an outcast, that one quiet kid that no one talks to, and everyone ignores, like a picture that only gets acknowledged when someone knocks it off the wall. This perception of myself has always inhibited my growth as an individual. I never broke out of my shell, choosing to keep within the comfort I have always known rather than break free into discomfort and move towards becoming an even greater person. I often struggle with the thought that if it were not for my seemingly natural ability to focus and do well in school, that I probably would have been a failure at life, never to achieve any merit, any praise, just to fade into nothingness surrounded by the deafening world we inhabit today.

Although I describe myself in this manner, I would like to think that I have a much lower view of myself than others, especially compared to my family, friends, and the teachers that have taught me. These people have always believed in me, knowing that I could achieve greatness, even when I felt that greatness was impossible. My mind instantly reminisces on the countless times my Mother would, for lack of better term, nag me about completing my work. Work that I had no motivation, energy, or even intention of beginning. As I contemplate on my time in High School, I see that it was not me who truly led myself to this point, but rather it was those around me that pushed me, and inspired me to believe in myself. These individuals motivated me enough to get to the point where I stand today, wearing this badge with pride I have never felt before in my life. If it were not for these people, my self-fulfilling prophecy would probably have come true, and I would have vanished to be forgotten as another lonely kid too apathetic, angst-ridden, and angry to achieve anything.

I would like to state something to my fellow students which I hope they ponder on. I want you to consider who is truly responsible for you being on this stage, I want you to recognize the credit those around you have had in leading you to this point, because they likely played a greater role than you acknowledge. I previously voiced that I don't feel deserving of this title, to be named valedictorian. If I had to guess why, I would say that it is most logically because of the perceived fact that this honor truly belongs to everyone who was with me along my journey through school. If it were not for them, I in all likelihood wouldn't have made it this far.

Hopefully, this speech was not too disheartening, and hopefully I have thanked some who have previously gone unrecognized. Lastly, I would just like to say that if you were close to me in my life, if you encouraged me, or inspired me, you are more deserving than I to wear this honor, I merely borrowed your positivity, your wisdom, your love, your gratitude and took credit for it, and for this offense I will feel forever guilty and most grateful.

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