
Main Features of Steve Jobs' Graduation Speech

In 2005, Steve Jobs gave a commencement address at Stanford University's graduation. I was not at Stanford's graduation that year, but I was asked to watch this speech last year in English and write my response to it. That was the first time that I had heard Jobs' speech, and although it was aimed towards inspiring an audience of college graduates, I aimed some of that inspiration at myself as a soon to be high school graduate. There were many aspects of his speech that were inspirational, but a few struck me harder than others. To begin his speech, Jobs tells the audience that he is going to tell them three stories: one about connecting the dots, the second about love and loss, and the third about death. From each of these stories I took away something inspirational.

The first story about connecting the dots I found to be ironic, because in it Jobs tells about how he dropped out of college six months into his freshman year despite the fact that he is talking to a group of graduates from a very expensive and prestigious university. He says he did so because he could not see the value in it and did not want to continue to waste his parents' money. Next he goes to say that he stuck around for an additional eighteen months as a drop in to classes that actually interested him before really quitting, getting at the point that you should follow your curiosity always. As a result of his dropping into a calligraphy class, he explains that Macintosh's had beautiful fonts and therefore so did all other personal computers that followed it. From this story, I found Jobs' underlying message to always follow your curiosities very inspirational and took it into account in my own life. I took it as him saying that if you pursue what interests you, you will be successful in the end. In his second story about love and loss, he talks about getting fired from Apple, the company that he started and built. He says, "...what had been the focus of my entire adult life was gone, and it was devastating...I felt that I had let the previous generation of entrepreneurs down, that I had dropped the baton as it was being passed to me" (Jobs, 2005). He goes on to say how after this disappointment, he went on to create Pixar which was later bought by Apple. He had persevered through losing everything he worked for, and ended up on top anyways because of it. Not only did I find Jobs' perseverance in the story to be inspirational, but also his use of a metaphor with dropping the baton. This made his situation very relatable to any audience because anyone can understand the feeling that must come from that. Lastly, in his third story about death, Jobs discusses how he once read a quote along the lines of how he should live everyday as if it were his last, and so he did. Then he went on to talk about his cancer diagnosis and how he survived but had now better understood that any day could be his last. Towards the end of his story he tells the audience, "Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life... Don't let the noise of others opinions drown out your inner voice, and most important have the courage to follow your heart and intuition, they somehow already know what you truly want to become, everything else is

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secondary” (Jobs, 2005). The statement itself was inspiration to me, but his call to action for the audience to follow this advice in their life was inspirational to all. He engaged the audience to really take to heart what he was saying. Many of the ways that Jobs was inspirational in his speech I could see myself incorporating into my own speeches.

I would like to use stories from my own life to inspire others and engage the audience more to keep them thinking and processing what I am saying. To do so I plan to try and relate my research or anything that my speech involves to not only examples from my own life but to the audience so that they are interested in what I am saying. To get the audience involved I plan to try and ask more questions or call them to action in my conclusion and throughout my speech. By doing these things I think that I will be able to strengthen my speeches and be more inspirational as a speaker overall.

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