

Good morning all, and welcome to the graduation ceremony of Mount Everett's Class of 2021. I thank you all for being here, our friends, family, Mt. Everett faculty and staff, and of course, those of you who will be watching from home. We are grateful for your presence and support on this important day. We couldn't have made it without you, even if we don't always want to admit it. On the topic of not admitting things, I would also like to quickly apologize to my family and friends that I didn't tell I was salutatorian. Surprise!

I quite honestly never imagined I would be the one giving this speech, but nonetheless, I will try to offer you my subpar advice. I have known many of you since preschool and kindergarten, yet I don't actually know most of you that well. It would be unfair for me to stand up here talk as though I was. Because in the same way, I don't think any of you really know

me either. But today, I'm going to take the opportunity to share a part of my story in the hopes you can all find at least a little good in it.

I have spent the last four years of my life waiting for today. Every year was just a countdown to the final year, then the final months, down to my very last days here. I turned high school into a waiting game, rather than enjoying the moment I was in, constantly thinking about my future. I barely sleep, and I constantly spend my nights doing homework. I don't go out that often and I rarely hang out with friends. I regret that. I was so focused on my grades and had such a lack of understanding of myself that I don't think I have ever had the true high school experience. Now, this also might just be because I'm not really the coolest kid around, but we can just ignore that fact for now. Standing up here leaving the life I know behind, I wish I had spent more time living my life day by day, rather than constantly

dwelling on my future. Besides, now I've learned that depending on the undetermined future is reckless. The future is unstable and uncertain. I have struggled a lot mentally because I was constantly putting so much effort into things that I had no control over. During these past few months, I have realized now how stupid it was of me to pin my happiness on an unpredictable future. Live by today. Not by yesterday, not by tomorrow. Right now, minute by minute. This may feel extremely irregular, and sometimes it may feel impossible. But sometimes the only true way to prepare in life is to live irregularly.

If you spend your time constantly looking into the future, you will miss the little things that are right in front of you.

Whether the current moment may be happy, sad, stressful, or frustrating, it is important that you focus your attention on it.

You will always trip over bumps on an unknown road if you don't occasionally look down to see where your feet are

currently placed. It may be hard to do sometimes but allows you to live your life much more freely. The sad moments may seem worse, but what makes it worth it is how much happier the good moments feel. Step over the ditch, or the rock, and if you need to, take your time with it. There is no rush to throw yourself into an unknown world. This story may be extremely overused, but living your life like the tortoise, and spending your days learning about yourself and what makes you happy, is better than rushing into your future like the hare. I live my days knowing there will be another happy moment. Whether that be today, tomorrow, or the next day after that. Sometimes waiting for those moments is hard. I know how hard it can be. I have spent the last 4 years of my life depending on these happy moments to keep me going. But in the end, you don't remember waiting between these moments, no matter how long. You remember the happy memories. The moments with your friends, getting a good grade

on something you worked hard on, or even just listening to music in the car. You remember these times. You don't remember the days, weeks, or months between these moments. I get up every day and see how far I can go, without worrying about if I may get stuck the next. Whether or not my day is good or bad, I keep pushing myself towards my next happy moment. Because as Martin Luther King said: "you don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step." Or in this case, as Dory said "Just keep swimming" or at least, stepping.

I'm not sure how many times any of you have been told to look for the good in things or to focus on the present. But I wanted to share this with you because this is what I wish someone told me 4 years ago. It has been really hard for me all these years of high school. I never looked for the good in anything, and it gave me a rather pessimistic outlook on both myself and the world around me. I would not wish that feeling

upon anyone. So here I stand, to say that no matter where you are going, whether that be to college, to serve our country, into a career, or any other path you may choose to take, it will all be okay, and that there always be another good day. Happiness is the gift that will always give, as long as you wait. And I promise it will always be worth the wait, no matter how long.

That was a lot heavier than I originally intended to go, but I don't think I could have spoken about anything else. And so, I hope you found my advice, or even just my story, impactful or inspirational on at least a slight level. When I first started writing this speech, I wanted to avoid being cliché. But as I wrote, I realized that these topics about following your dreams or living in the moment or finding the little happy things have been repeated not out of a lack of topics, but because they have never lost their importance. So to my classmates, I am not going to tell you to follow your dreams, as I assume you heard that far

too many times in elementary school. But what I am going to tell you, is to live in the moment, and to find the little happy things within those moments. Thrive on that happiness, and don't let the bad moments define you. Because, as Dolly Parton said: "The way I see it, if you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain." Thank you.