

Baccalaureate Speech by Margaret Mirro

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I feel weird, knowing that tomorrow we graduate. I swear I missed the entire month of April. I know it should have been there, it just went by way too quickly for me to process. It's weird.

I don't like change. I just don't like it. For example: when I switched to my current piano teacher, I told her that I didn't want to take lessons with her. Ever. Well, mom put her foot down, and I took lessons with her. Then I decided that I didn't want to play a sonatina. Ever. You can probably guess how that one turned out.

I guess the point of this is that everyone changes, all the time. Really, we do. Even if it grosses you out, Mary-Ashley, your atoms and molecules are changing all the time. You're losing cells and growing cells and changing cells. It's inevitable, so it doesn't make sense that I dislike it so much. I guess I've just gotten amazingly comfortable with the current state of affairs.

Change can be bad. It can take away those you love, or stir things around in your life until you're ready to pull your hair out, much like the way that Austin does when he's frustrated. Change can also be good – like my going to a new teacher whom I've grown to love, or to a new school (St. George's) where I've found truly amazing people. Either way you look at it, change is taking a watercolor out into the rain. It could look good, or it could look bad, but no matter what you do, the paint is going to run.

With all this change going on around us, I took the time to find some advice that will never change. The great love of my life, besides Nathan, is Disney, so I'm taking all my advice from the classics.

Rule number one is from *Tarzan*: "Me Tarzan, you Jane." It doesn't seem like advice, but it is. You've got to start somewhere. You can't meet people without learning their names. Yes, you've got to talk to people. You never know whether the people you meet are going to become your best friends. You should learn how to make that first step in a conversation. No other rule of etiquette is quite that important.

My second piece of advice comes from *Beauty and the Beast*: you must control your temper! Not everyone is going to agree with you, and you can't out-argue everyone. A little compromise goes a long way, and people will like you better in the end. Plus, we all look really silly when we get upset over something stupid.

The third piece of advice is this: just keep swimming. What do we do? We swim. Obviously, that's from *Finding Nemo*. It means that when things get bad, and you feel like you can't make it through one more second, you just keep going. Fish die if they stop moving – so will humans. Not literally, of course; but in all the ways that are important, humans die if they stop moving forward. So keep swimming. It'll work out soon.

Next, we go to *Hercules*: a true hero isn't measured by the size of his strength, but by the strength of his heart. Exercise your heart – not only by doing cardio workouts, but through love. Not boyfriend-girlfriend love, or the way you love chocolate and pizza, but the love that makes the world go 'round. It's the

love that you feel somewhere between your stomach and your throat, that lets you know someone knows who you are and actually cares. Life's too short to waste – it's unbelievable. Don't let your head rule over your heart; there are no equations that add up to something as perfect as love. Don't forget about love.

My fifth piece of advice is from *Aladdin*: Do not be fooled by its commonplace appearance. Like so many things, it is not what is outside, but what is inside that counts. Keep looking for the diamond in the rough – no one is really what they seem, and yes, everyone has a buried life. First impressions are perhaps the worst disservice we can do another human being. It shows them as less than they truly are, and keeps them from shining.

My next tidbit comes from *Cinderella*: have faith in your dreams. Not only are you clinically insane if you don't get enough sleep, you're in trouble without dreams. Dreams give you something to work towards, and to strive for. Maybe, you'll even wind up with a glass slipper. Jay, we all know you already have some. The point is, you can't get anywhere in this world without dreaming about where you want to be.

Sixth is *Alice in Wonderland* (the new one): You're entirely bonkers. But I'll tell you a secret. All the best people are. Einstein was crazy; so was Copernicus, and so was Galileo. Crazy is not a bad thing – it makes life way more fun. And sometimes, crazy people make the most sense. We're all a little crazy, anyway. No one's normal. Who would want to be? You should aim to imagine as many as six impossible things before breakfast.

Finally, my last piece of advice comes from the *Lion King*: remember who you are. You are more than just the sum of all of your parts: you are your parents, siblings, friends, your school, your activities, your experiences, your thoughts. Most of all, you are yourself. There's no one else like you – seriously. Do you know how many combinations of genes and alleles it took to make you into you? It's mind-blowing. We cannot comprehend that large of a number. You are truly singular. Remember who you are.

I would talk about everything that I'm going to miss when I leave, but there are two problems with that: 1) it would make me cry, and 2) it would take me far too long to go through it all, even if I didn't cry. I'm just going to say that I'm going to miss this class and this school more than words can tell you. It's been an experience, being in your class for these seven years. You've taught me more than you can imagine. I want to thank all of you. It is truly an honor to graduate with you.