

00:06
- Good evening, everyone.
00:07
When I saw the video being played,
00:09
I thought I was gonna get another degree.
00:12
I didn't realize I was still
00:14
on the same last one.
00:15
I was like, this is going to be unprecedented.
00:17
I can't tell you how happy I am to be here.
00:20
President Kelly,
00:22
the Provost,
00:24
faculty and staff and the administration,
00:28
and most importantly to the class of 2020,
00:30
good evening to you and your families.
00:34
I'm so happy to be sharing your moment,
00:36
although deferred,
00:38
tonight with you.
00:40
Now, if I understand this correctly,
00:42
this is the last commencement ceremony of this weekend.
00:46
This is the last one,
00:47
I see you're pretty excited.
00:49
Now what is that they say about the best?
00:54
(crowd cheers)
00:56
They save it for last.
00:57
And so here we are.
00:58
(crowd clapping)
00:59
We have saved the best for last.
01:02
(crowd clapping)
01:07
So as it were,
01:08
here we are,
01:10
in this absolutely cherished Boston landmark.
01:14
I grew up in Boston,
01:16

and I can recall about my dreams
01:18
about standing here
01:20
albeit not in a robe,
01:22
but in cleats,
01:23
and a pair of white pants.
01:26
And yes, I must confess that I'd hope
01:28
that the choice of America's most beloved ballpark
01:31
for this ceremony
01:32
would involve my throwing out a ceremonial first pitch.
01:37
But even without that,
01:38
I'm glad to be here with you.
01:41
It's been a long weekend, as you just heard.
01:43
This is actually my second commencement address.
01:46
Yesterday, I spoke to the class of 2021
01:50
from the law school.
01:51
And in case you're wondering,
01:53
they looked a lot more tired than you do.
01:58
Now, I'm a very lucky man.
01:59
There isn't any question about that.
02:02
I've done okay in my life
02:04
and my legal career.
02:05
And you would probably have expected
02:08
that I would have advised all
02:09
of those budding lawyers to work hard
02:13
and to be a credit to their profession
02:16
and to be grateful for every day that they spend
02:19
doing such important work.
02:21
Well, that wasn't exactly what I said.
02:25
In fact, I suggested to them
02:26
that they do the opposite.
02:29
I suggested to them that they go for a walk,

02:32
and on that walk,
02:34
I asked them to think long
02:35
and hard about their future.
02:38
I asked them to make sure
02:39
that this was absolutely
02:41
how they wanted their lives to pan out,
02:44
and not be afraid
02:47
if the answer was no,
02:49
because there is one thing much,
02:51
much worse than being 25 years old
02:55
and coming to this huge realization
02:59
that you are embarking on the wrong career,
03:03
and that is to be 65 years old
03:06
and reflecting that you've just spent four decades
03:10
living the wrong life for you.
03:14
And it may surprise you,
03:16
even though I love my job,
03:19
and I'm honored to have been chosen to do that,
03:22
that I would consider yesterday to be a success.
03:26
If one single person from that class
03:30
comes back from that walk
03:32
and decides to pursue a different dream,
03:36
which brings me to you wonderful people.
03:38
Younger and with even more doors open to you.
03:43
Some of you are on the road to a career in law
03:46
or maybe to be an accountant
03:48
or in the military,
03:49
or technology,
03:50
or communication,
03:52
you are at a wonderful moment in your lives,
03:55

a moment where you can plot your own course,
03:59
where the world is yours for the taking,
04:03
and where you are bound by very few ties.
04:07
And when you wake up tomorrow
04:11
there's just one simple thing
04:13
that I ask you to remember
04:15
from this Suffolk alum.
04:20
It's that it's okay to say no.
04:24
Now let's dwell on that for a minute,
04:27
because saying it like that
04:28
probably sounds counterintuitive
04:30
and pretty negative,
04:32
but it's not.
04:34
It won't have passed by any of you
04:36
that you are Class of 2020,
04:38
graduating here today
04:40
a year later in May of 2021,
04:43
that you've waited all of this time.
04:47
It's symbolic of a world
04:48
in which so many people
04:50
have deferred a year of their lives.
04:55
So I imagine that you've gotta be bursting with impatience
04:59
to make your mark on this adult life,
05:01
to build businesses,
05:03
improve lives,
05:05
and to add value.
05:07
You must be desperate to knock down doors,
05:11
jump on flights,
05:12
and to cash in all of these qualifications that you have.
05:17
And with the vaccine roll out on full swing,
05:20
and the prospect of better times ahead,

05:23
and all that pent up frustration
05:25
must be pretty explosive right now.
05:27
And that would be understandable.
05:30
So let me give you a little piece of advice
05:32
that you may not want to hear.
05:36
The biggest mistake you can make now is to rush,
05:42
because although you may not feel like it right now,
05:44
you've spent your entire lives rushing.
05:48
Rushing through the system,
05:49
from nursery school to junior school,
05:52
to junior high, middle school,
05:54
for your seniors into college,
05:56
fueled by this constant diet of tests
05:59
and assessments and deadlines.
06:03
And on the whole,
06:03
you have done an absolutely marvelous job.
06:07
You've lept over all of those hurdles
06:10
that have been laid out for you
06:11
on the United States educational conveyor belt.
06:15
And you've made it.
06:17
To this day when you get the dress up,
06:19
throw your hats in the air,
06:20
and celebrate your success.
06:22
And you should.
06:24
But just before jumping onto the next conveyor belt,
06:29
this is a fine moment,
06:30
but it's also a dangerous one,
06:33
because from your perspective,
06:34
that conveyor belt is moving fast,
06:37
and it may feel like you have to jump on,
06:39

to get moving, to leap into your future,
06:43
but please don't do so without thinking,
06:46
without questioning your true motives,
06:50
and trying to imagine the day
06:51
when you will look back
06:53
on this moment as the day
06:55
you made a choice
06:56
that potentially had more impact
06:59
on your lives than your choice of partner,
07:03
or even your choice of baseball team.
07:08
This choice of career will in all probability
07:11
take up more of your time
07:12
than any other relationship that you have.
07:16
It'll impact your mood,
07:17
and it'll impact your lifestyle,
07:19
and it'll impact your health.
07:21
It also impact your bank account,
07:23
but also more importantly,
07:25
your sense of happiness and fulfillment.
07:28
And at this stage of your lives,
07:30
it's so easy to make a call based on everything
07:33
and anything other than what is right for you.
07:39
You all are the graduates of the arts and sciences.
07:42
Your skillset can translate
07:44
into almost anything,
07:46
to grad school or law school,
07:47
retail, philanthropy,
07:49
transportation, technology.
07:54
Embrace that choice.
07:57
Embrace your freedom to choose,
08:00
because next week,

08:02
you'll wake up and you'll be 50,
08:05
which is no bad place to be,
08:08
but it comes with responsibilities
08:10
that you can barely imagine right now
08:12
when it comes with the heavy realization
08:14
that it may be too late to start again.
08:18
Looking at me, standing here,
08:19
I'm sure it will come as a huge surprise to you
08:22
that I love to eat.
08:25
I love eating with my friends,
08:27
and before the pandemic,
08:29
some of our favorite nights out would be going out
08:32
and eating at buffets,
08:35
with a whole ocean of textures
08:37
and foods and smells from every bowl.
08:41
But when we first visited,
08:43
I would grab the first tasty dish
08:46
that I could find,
08:47
the first one that I could see,
08:49
and eat too much of it,
08:52
and find there wasn't enough space
08:54
to try anything else.
08:55
I realized
08:57
that I had missed the best options
09:00
by going too hard too soon.
09:06
These days I look harder.
09:08
I plan more than one course at a time.
09:11
I take a pause before jumping in,
09:14
and that makes for a much, much better meal.
09:18
I don't need to tell you
09:19

that that story has less to do about my appetite
09:23
and more to do about the choices facing you right now,
09:27
because the biggest mistake
09:28
that you can make
09:29
is to jump in
09:31
and do the wrong thing.
09:33
By the wrong thing,
09:34
I mean something that isn't truly,
09:37
authentically you.
09:40
Trust me.
09:41
I did it in my thirties
09:43
when I was tempted by crisp, green bills,
09:45
and I stopped practicing law
09:47
to become a recruiter.
09:48
And let me tell you,
09:49
if money's your thing,
09:50
you may find it there.
09:53
You can call up contacts,
09:55
introduce them to new firms,
09:56
and get paid whenever they make a move.
09:58
It's a great life,
10:01
for the right person.
10:03
But in retrospect,
10:05
I knew before I took that opportunity
10:06
that I was the wrong person.
10:08
And let me tell you,
10:11
you'll never stop dreaming.
10:13
Hell, even before I was so excited about being here
10:17
and having the honor of speaking to you,
10:19
I still got a little wistful
10:21
about what it would be like to be here,

10:23
playing baseball,
10:26
because the grass is always greener.
10:30
And I started dreaming out loud recently
10:33
when chatting with a very dear friend of mine,
10:35
Rod Osborne,
10:35
who happens to be here.
10:36
He's sitting up there in the box
10:38
with the rest of my family.
10:41
It was something that he said to me
10:44
that made for the start
10:45
of what I wanted to say to you all.
10:48
We were discussing our lives and our jobs,
10:50
and I said to him that
10:51
although I loved what I did,
10:53
and I do,
10:55
I was reflecting on the lives led by partners
10:57
in big law firms
10:58
with huge second homes on the vineyard.
11:02
Even with private boxes at the ball game,
11:06
and their fleets of high performance cars.
11:08
And like the good friend that he is,
11:11
Rod told it to me like it is.
11:13
I woke up the next morning
11:15
to a text message from Rod.
11:17
Let me read some of it to you.
11:20
Serge,
11:22
I have to warn you about something.
11:26
Don't fall into the trap
11:27
of looking at your peers
11:28
and get frustrated about what your life isn't.
11:33

No one can move forward looking over their shoulder

11:35

and second guessing their life.

11:37

You're doing something meaningful

11:39

and memorable with your life,

11:41

and that's worth more than money.

11:47

I read it,

11:49

and I felt a little ashamed.

11:51

Actually, I felt a lot of shame.

11:53

He's right, of course.

11:55

I've got a great life.

11:56

I wake up every day, excited.

12:00

I go to bed having been challenged

12:02

in the best possible ways.

12:05

I was born to do what I'm doing.

12:07

And I love it.

12:08

That's worth savoring,

12:11

even without a life on the vineyard.

12:14

I'm not sure if standing here

12:16

inside this grand old stadium

12:18

that I'm allowed to say

12:20

that one of my equally beloved teams

12:23

is the Boston Bruins.

12:25

If not, I apologize.

12:28

But the bruin of course is a bear,

12:32

which reminds me of a chat I had

12:33

with another friend recently

12:35

when he observed that we as human beings

12:38

are the only creatures on Earth

12:40

who spent so much of our time

12:42

trying to be something else.

12:46

Take a big, brown bear, he said.

12:49
She doesn't walk through the forest
12:50
wishing she was a person or a dog
12:54
or horse.
12:56
She's quite happy being just a bear.
12:59
And that means she can focus 100%
13:02
on being the very best bear she can be.
13:06
She hibernates like a bear,
13:07
hunts like a bear,
13:09
eats like a bear.
13:10
She's completely true to herself.
13:12
And,
13:15
he added, there are times
13:16
when I wish I were more like her.
13:21
And I think there's an important lesson there.
13:23
When you look ahead dreaming
13:25
and making plans,
13:27
make sure that your dreams and your plans
13:30
don't choose your next steps
13:32
because you won an award
13:33
or because you want a new car
13:35
or because your parents made it clear
13:38
that's what they want for you.
13:40
Don't make decisions based
13:42
on what sounds good in a bar
13:43
or it looks good on a resume,
13:46
and don't do it if it doesn't inspire you,
13:49
because it will only not bring out the best in you.
13:54
You never want to wake up one day
13:57
and resent your life.
13:59
You may already have a job
14:00

or be starting a new course of study.
14:02
But remember how young you are.
14:03
Assuming you're not even yet 25 years old.
14:07
Your brains haven't even stopped developing.
14:11
Don't do something
14:12
because someone else thinks it's right for you.
14:14
Please,
14:17
do it because it is you.
14:19
And if it's not,
14:22
please, don't be afraid to say no,
14:25
because if you are true to yourself,
14:28
you will never suffer
14:29
from the imposter syndrome,
14:31
you will never be resentful,
14:32
and most importantly,
14:33
you will never regret the life you have chosen.
14:37
And I will give that same advice
14:39
to my own children.
14:40
Be yourselves.
14:42
Do what truly makes you happy.
14:44
And don't be afraid to say no.
14:47
Short change is possible,
14:49
but it's much easier
14:50
to make the career decision
14:52
that is right for you right now.
14:56
Today doesn't mark an end.
14:58
It can't.
15:00
It's your commencement,
15:01
which means the beginning.
15:05
A fresh start,
15:06
where all the choices are all yours to make.

15:11

And I promise you

15:13

that you will never regret those choices

15:15

if they set you free

15:18

and enable you

15:19

to be the very best you,

15:21

that you can be.

15:24

I cannot tell you how much

15:26

I wish you good luck.

15:29

I cannot tell you how much I root for you,

15:33

but now's the time.

15:35

Go get em.

15:36

Congratulations.

15:38

(crowd claps)