

Harry Scanlon

College Captain

Speech Day 29 October 2015

Good Afternoon Guest Speaker, the Honourable Mr Christopher Pyne, Chair of Council Fr Mullins, Father Rector, Head of Senior School Mr Coffey, Head of Junior School Mr Fitzpatrick, Distinguished Guests, families, staff and students.

Michael Jordan once said, "I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed." This quote begs the question, how can you fail over, and over again while on the world stage and still classify it as succeeding? Ask yourself, what do you classify as succeeding? Think about one thing you want to achieve, are you willing to fail over and over in order to achieve success?

It has been 364 days, 524 thousand 160 minutes or 31 billion 449 million 600 thousand seconds since I last stood on this stage. (I probably should have spent the time it took to figure all that out studying!) On stage last year, the first thought that came into my mind was, what will I write for next year's speech day? Since then, it has been 364 days, 524 thousand 160 minutes or 31 billion 449 million 600 thousand seconds of staring at a blank page considering what to write in this speech. In the last few years we have heard speeches about recipes, juggling and more, but what I am going to talk about is learning to fail, and how that will achieve success.

Growing up, quotes have always provided me with insight into adulthood, with thoughts about learning how to fail and how to succeed. One important lesson I have learnt through reading countless quotes, is that we all classify failing and succeeding in different ways. It is commonly thought in society today that succeeding is defined by money, power and by the ability to "not fail". However, think about Michael Jordan's words, "I have failed over and over again in my life, and that is why I succeed". Think again about that one thing you want to achieve. Are you willing to fail time and time again to get where you want to be?

The word crisis in Chinese, is comprised of two characters, danger, and opportunity.

This clearly demonstrates the idea that through our failures we have the choice, to allow failure to define us or take that failure as an opportunity to get closer to the ultimate goal. What really is success? My definition of success may be different from yours and that is the way it is supposed to be, however how we come to have that success is where we are all similar. Failures will happen no matter how prepared you are, whether it's an exam or a sporting event or anything else. When you find yourself in the thick of it, no matter how good the plan, things happen.

Mike Tyson the famous boxer summed this up pretty well when he said, "Everyone has a plan...until they get punched in the face". Dare I say most year 12's experienced this feeling about a year ago, starting Year 12. My entire schooling life was leading up to this final year

after years of preparation. I had it all planned out, however then life 'punched me in the face' in the form of some personal issues.

I thought I had everything planned to the letter, but year 12 had a different path set for me. Looking back, the best way to deal with this was to just expect the unexpected, there was really nothing else to do.

At Saint Ignatius' College, no matter how long you have been a part of this community you would have been told how we respond to our failures and how we move forward will define us. The first time I learnt this was in year 1, with Ms Carty, who always knew how to get us to listen, by simply threatening to unleash 'Cranky Carty' on us, and being a shy, small, skinny 7 year old with a horrendous comb over haircut I was terrified at what cranky Carty would do if I didn't listen.

Bear Grylls, once said, "Commit to fail. Nothing worthwhile is easy. Every time I fail, I take comfort in knowing I am one step closer to my goal. So get busy failing. It is always better to make a bad decision than no decision at all." Bear Grylls is a former Special Forces soldier who broke the three main vertebrae in his back due to a skydiving incident. It was only after years of rehabilitation he decided to attempt to be the youngest person ever to climb Mount Everest, despite doctors telling him he may never walk again.

I am not saying you have to break your back and climb Mt Everest to succeed, but the mindset is still the same. We cannot afford to fear failing, we must embrace it because no matter what we do we will fail. We create what we fear, if we spend our time trying to avoid failure we are going to in fact create it.

I am not going to pretend to come up here and give you advice on how to live as if I am an expert: I haven't even turned 18 yet. The ideas and thoughts I have presented to you are things which I have been taught by those around me, and things which I have had to learn through failing. As Mr Coffey says, "What thumbprint are you going to leave on the world, are you going to set it in stone, or in sand?" This will be defined both by how we react to our failures and how we act when we do succeed. Humble in victory, gracious in defeat.

To those of you in year 11 entering the world of year 12, I have two pieces of advice. Number 1, work hard, plan early and ask lots of questions.

Number 2, and probably most importantly, no matter how tempting, stay away from the fast food, trust me eating away your stress will not serve you well.

I would like to thank all the College staff on behalf of the class of 2015 for the opportunities you have provided us with. Thank you to all the teachers who have been a part of our growth as Ignatians from the Junior School and the Senior School.

I would also like to thank my family for having the foresight to send me to this school 13 years ago, it has truly been an amazing journey.