

Dear graduating students, graduates, colleagues and friends,

First of all congratulations to the newly graduating students to finish your studies at the best University in Japan (well we have more Nobel Prize than Tokyo U.!), and one of the best universities in the world.

I wish you all the best in your future career as you start a new journey and a new chapter in your lives.

In this very short speech, I'd like you to remember two keywords which I hope may help you in your forthcoming careers and lives. And those are all based on my personal experiences, so I can say they are tested and work – or at least they worked for me.

First keyword is “change”, or the “courage to change”. I started my academic life as an engineer in Turkey. I continued with a master's degree in management in the UK, and then continued with engineering and at the same time economics studies in Japan. Afterwards I also worked briefly at Harvard and MIT. As you know I ended up as being a professor of corporate strategy at Kyoto University. So as you can see there have been many twists or changes in my life, from engineering to economics to management. From Turkey where I was born, to the UK, Japan, US and back to Japan.

The reason I made all these changes is simply because I followed my heart or my passion – I did at any specific time what I thought I loved most and was most passionate about. By doing what I loved most and where I loved most, I became eventually happy, and I think also I became successful.

Of course, there are times when you need to be patient and do things you do not like, or feel down and question what you are doing. But the point is, I truly believe that you need to have the courage to change when you are not happy or satisfied in a situation. Because I believe success in career and life comes when you are only passionate about something. So, my advice to you is to have the guts or the courage to change the direction of your life when you feel unsatisfied or unhappy in what you are doing. It may be the company you are working, the industry you are working or the country you are working in. I am sure you will find a place where you will be truly satisfied, happy and thus successful in the end. Just don't be afraid and have the courage to change when you feel it is necessary.

Second keyword is “resilience”. Resilience means when you are knocked down by any external or internal forces, it is about coming back to your original state. That is the “ability to bounce back”. In life, and this can be professional life like your work and career, or personal life like your marriage or partnership with someone, there will be times when things go bad – and sometimes beyond repair. There are also other external events like the experience of loss of a loved one, or internal issues within your own self like times of depression perhaps. I believe these are all inevitable things in anyone's lives and we all experience such negative circumstances more or less at different points in our lives.

My advice to you here is to have “resilience” or the “power to bounce back”. This is easy to say but can be extremely difficult to do. Like everyone else, I have faced many professional and personal challenges in my life. But eventually I always found the strength in me to bounce back. The secret I want to share today with you is what creates that strength to bounce back. For me it has always been passion in something new and different. Let me explain by a simple example. A few years ago, I faced a personal traumatic event, and was feeling very down for some time. Then one day in a small meeting with the KU President Minato sensei and our Dean Sawabe sensei where we were discussing about empowering

women, a light suddenly shined in my brain. I thought of establishing a new program on female executives at Kyoto U and felt a great sense of excitement in doing that. It may sound a bit crazy, but it is actually what happened. Eventually I managed to establish a new program called Women's Executive Leadership thanks to the help of many colleagues. But more importantly, during this whole process, I slowly started bouncing back and started enjoying my life again.

I do believe luck plays an important part in this whole process, that is I was lucky to be in a meeting with our President, and our Dean supported my idea of establishing a new program etc. But I do not think luck explains everything. I think you need to find the strength in yourselves and believe that there will be eventually sunshine after rain whatever goes wrong in your professional or personal lives.

So, the point is, and again I repeat it is much easier said than done, but whenever things turn bad in your lives, please remember to find the strength in yourselves to bounce back. And remember, as the German philosopher Nietzsche famously said; "that which does not kill you, makes you stronger".

Finally, you might have noticed that the two keywords I mentioned, change and resilience, are tied to each other by another keyword – that is passion. Passion is a strong feeling of enthusiasm or excitement for something or about doing something. I changed from engineering to management and from Turkey to Japan because I felt more passionate in the new setting; that is working on management and in Japan. And I could bounce back from the negativities I was experiencing a few years ago because I found something new that I felt very passionate about doing – and at the time it was empowering women in Japan through a new program I dreamed of establishing.

So my final piece of advice to you is to find your passion – things you really love to do – in your lives and pursue those. When you do that, I truly believe you will eventually be happy and also successful in your lives.

You are just in the beginning of your lives, and I wish you all a great professional career and personal life.

Thanks for being a part of our School and hope to see you again, and this time not as a student but as a colleague and a friend.

Thank you.

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