Good evening everyone. I’d like to share a story with you tonight, and I promise it has a point.

This past summer, I worked for the Town of Huntington’s Preschool Playground Program, I was a counselor for a group of three year olds. Aside from the normal camp activities, each day I would help the kids make a page for an “end of camp” memory book. Most days, they had to draw a picture of their families, or tell me about their favorite things. One day, I called over the campers to ask what they wanted to be when they grew up. Most giggled as they said, “A princess!” “A firefighter!” “Taller!!” However, when I got to one of the quieter girls in the class, she looked up at me with a steady gaze. “What do you what to be when you grow up?” I asked, to which she sincerely replied, “A tomato.”

Under any other circumstances I would have laughed, but despite the adorable absurdity, I simply couldn’t. “What?” I said, thinking perhaps I had heard wrong. “I want to be a tomato when I grow up,” she responded very clearly. I was surprised to see passion reflected in her small features. I suddenly didn’t have a doubt in my mind that if this child wanted to be a tomato one day, she’d find a way to make that happen.

I’m fairly certain that time will guide her to other goals, but my point in all this is that you should pursue what makes you happy. Before me, I see
our next generation. Among you are the book-smart (the scholars who took, and aced, a million APs), the athletic (those who gave 110% on the field, in a pool, on the track), the talented (all the artists, dancers, musicians, and those who are proficient in a trade) and the street-smart (those who have learned how to thrive in most difficult of circumstances). All of you are about to take your first step into the real world, as a high school graduate. Some of you will shortly be stepping back into the education system to go to college, while others may go directly into the workforce, take time off to think, or do any number of the endless options that lie before you.

Still, no matter who you are or what your “next step” is, I urge you to never let go of your dreams. Whether you want to be rich, famous, successful, loved, or a tomato, don’t let anyone tell you that your future is ridiculous. You’ll have to work hard, and you may have days that seem hopeless, but ultimately if you want it badly enough, you hold the power to bring your dream of a brighter future to fruition.

Class of 2013, I wish you the very best of luck in all you do. Congratulations!