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The Last Lecture Thoughts

The first point in Randy Pausch’s Last Lecture that really affected me was in the very beginning of the video, where Pausch describes the state of his unfortunately damaged liver, and how his doctors told him that he had 3-6 months of good health left. Pausch states, “That is what it is, we can’t change it and we just have to decide how we’re going to respond to that. We cannot change the cards we are dealt, just how we play the hand.” This really resonated with me because I have been experiencing a similar lesson at this stage in my life. It took me much longer than it should have to realize that I don’t have the power to change certain things, no matter how much I want or need them to change, or how hard I try to change them. What I CAN change though, is how I respond, react to, or perceive certain situations. I think this is a valuable lesson to learn because I spent way too much of my life trying to change things I clearly could not control and beat myself up about it when I didn’t see any change. I have now realized that the best I can do in these situations is to adapt accordingly by evaluating what I am able to do to help the situation. I definitely identified with this message – and I didn’t expect to be able to write about what affected me so early on in the lecture!

Another point that affected me was about 6 minutes in when Pausch starts to talk about brick walls, and how they are there to prove how badly we want things. I resonated with this because going to school seemed impossible to me a few years ago. I was already 24, was bored and tired with life, and needed something more. There were many brick walls that stood in my way. I was older than most college-aged kids, being away from my family was extremely daunting for me, I didn’t have the funds to attend college, and the list goes on. There were even brick walls that seemed to appear out of nowhere after I enrolled in college, but with persistence, I was able to push through these walls that could sometimes appear out of thin air. Little did I know, those brick walls served as a bit of a test. How badly did I want to improve my lifestyle? How badly did I want to go to college and make something of myself? How badly did I want to make up for lost time spent wasting my days away with little purpose? I was very unprepared for adult life, but because of my determination to improve my life and way of living, I smashed down those brick walls, and here I sit today working on this assignment!

Another point I found really interesting was about 35 minutes into the video when Pausch explains to the audience how he gave his students a 2-week assignment and how surprised he was at the results. He was so impressed, he states that if he had given the assignment to the students over the whole semester instead of over 2 weeks, he would have given them all A’s. Pausch calls up his colleague to ask for some advice, and his colleague tells him, “You obviously don’t know where the bar should be, and you’re doing a disservice by putting in anywhere.” He told Pausch to tell his students, “This was really great guys, but I know you can do better.” The students continued to outperform and exceed Pausch’s expectations because of this, which might not have happened if he had told his students how amazing their works were during that first 2 weeks. With this sort of critique, the students didn’t get too comfortable, and created VR worlds that kept getting better and better. I like this thought because if you think you know everything, there is no room in your mind to really grow like you would if you saw room for improvement. This is motivating to me, for sure!

Something I just thought was cool was how the Carnegie Mellon University had contracts with companies such as EA and Activision, that stated how the companies would hire students from the ETC program to work internships with them. This is an amazing opportunity, and I think more universities need to include these great opportunities and programs in their curriculum! It is even more astounding that the ETC is a global program, operating in the US, Australia, Singapore, and South Korea! ETC’s success was largely attributed to how the curriculum was designed to help students learn to work in groups and with their peers, and to have fun while doing it! This is an important skill to have for careers in general, but especially for careers revolving around game development.