# What matters most to you and why?

## First draft

When I was 18, I sat in the lobby of a psychiatry clinic. I watched as the fire department entered the building and escorted my dad out of the building to be involuntarily committed to a psychiatric institution for in-patient treatment. A week earlier, my mom and I moved in with my grandparents to separate from dad. One day, he came to my grandparent's house, demanding to speak with my mother. My mother feeling unsafe, got in the car and drove away, leaving me in the care of my grandparents. My dad stalked my mom all over town until she found refuge at her therapists office. A couple days later and after drama settled down, my parents agreed to meet with a psychiatrist in hopes to come to a resolution. I drove my mom to the appointment, which landed me waiting in that lobby. The psychiatrist determined that he was a threat to me and my mom, and hence needed to be committed. The next day, I left to serve a two-year ecclesiastical mission in North Carolina--completely separated from my family.  
  
I can't fault my dad for consciously causing this situation. Many years earlier, he suffered a series of mini-strokes that damaged critical areas of his brain, taking away his "executive function" and leaving him with symptoms consistent with borderline personality disorder. Needless to say, my childhood was difficult. At about 15-years-old, I decided I wanted my life to be different and education was my path out. I poured all the negative energy I felt at home into my learning and excelled quite well--all the way through my undergrad program. As I grew and matured, my understanding of my life mission matured: I will build the life for my family that my father never did. I want to build the character that my father lacked, and I want to provide for my family the way my father never did. As I build that life, I want to bring others with me, lifting them to better circumstances.   
  
One of the ways I plan to lift others to better circumstances is by improving health outcomes. If I can be a leader that alleviates the suffering caused by medical conditions, then I will consider part of my life mission fulfilled. For a long time, I couldn't see how to do that given my STEM-heavy computer science background. But when I joined Dexcom I learned that I could use my technical ability to improve health outcomes of a different group: people with diabetes. At Dexcom, I built a platform to send marketing communications to populations of our users to increase engagement and bring more people to our life-improving therapies. Along the way, I coordinated closely with product management, and, for a time, led my team of developers; my product manager set the vision, and I led my team to materialize that vision, innovating along the way. Now, I want to become the person that determines the vision.   
  
Product management is the next step on my journey to improve health outcomes. I will use my technical experience to increase my power to define an innovative vision and coordinate with all the stakeholders involved in bringing products to market. Ultimately, I plan to start a venture that delivers a life-improving therapy at scale. However, considering that I have no previous venture-sized entrepreneurship experience or first-hand experience of the capital-raising process, I don't feel prepared to tackle such a big goal right away. Product management will give me industry and general business experience needed to prepare me for the entrepreneurship journey. Stanford will put me in an ecosystem where I will gain that first-hand experience I lack.

## Second Draft

When I was 18, I sat in the lobby of a psychiatry clinic. My mom and I watched as firefighters entered the building and escorted my dad to be involuntarily committed to a psychiatric institution. Medical professionals at the clinic determined that he was a danger to me and mom and that commitment was the best treatment option. The next day, I left my family to serve a two-year ecclesiastical mission in North Carolina. By the time I finished, I returned home to a new stepfather and had no contact with my dad. I can't fault my dad for consciously causing this situation. Many years earlier, he suffered a series of mini-strokes that damaged critical areas of his brain, taking away his "executive function" and leaving him with symptoms consistent with borderline personality disorder.

His condition made my childhood extremely difficult, but at about 15 years old, I decided I wanted my life to be different, and education was my path. I poured all the negative energy I felt at home into my learning and excelled. As I matured, my vision of my life mission matured: I will build a life for my family that my father never could. With that life, I have the responsibility to lift others to better circumstances. My wife and I are expecting our first child—a baby boy—on Christmas eve this year. As we’ve prepared for this baby, I’ve reinforced my drive to be a cycle-breaker and enable a better life for my child.

My parental experience is not unique. You probably know someone who’s felt the detrimental effects of neurological and mental health disorders. Maybe you are that person. These problems don’t just affect the health of the individual—they affect the emotional wellbeing of families and communities. I know because I’ve seen it firsthand, and you probably have, too. How would my dad’s life be different if he had had early detection or access to novel therapies? Were I to take my dad from 15 years ago 20 years into the future, could I show him some amazing technology to treat his condition?

I will lead the charge to develop innovative medical technologies to reduce the suffering of individuals, families, and communities that struggle with neurological conditions and deliver those technologies at scale. Given the suffering that I endured because of my dad’s condition, I cannot bear that anybody should have to go through that.

When I joined Dexcom, I learned to use my computer science ability to improve the health of people with diabetes by building a software platform to increase company engagement with our global base of millions of users, bringing more people to our life-saving therapies. I coordinated closely with product management and, for a time, led my team of developers; I led my team to realize my product manager’s vision while innovating along the way. Now, I want to become the person that defines the vision. I will pair my technical abilities with product management to multiply my positive impact on people with neurological disorders.

What matters most to me is that I am not defined by my difficult life experiences but use those experiences as a source of compassion and drive to make other people’s lives better. My experiences with my dad motivated me early-on to excel both academically and professionally. Now that I’ve seen how to use my computer scientist expertise to help people with diabetes, I want to apply that expertise to help those suffering from neurological disorders but in a more direct, high-impact, and large-scale manner.

# Why Stanford?

## Second Draft

In 2023, I attended a conference hosted at the Stanford Hospital for current and prospective Stanford MBA students from my church. One of the conference speakers was Stanford Hospital CEO David Entwistle. David described the hospital's operation, emphasizing its focus on incorporating cutting-edge, innovative technologies to improve patient care. David's speech showed me that Stanford is where I will start to realize my goal of pushing the frontier of medical technology and increasing therapy access via business. As I interacted with current students at the conference, I learned that the Stanford MBA community is full of innovative, interdisciplinary, compassionate people with a drive to make a difference. I want to be a part of and contribute to that community.

The next step on my journey to improve health outcomes is to become a product manager in MedTech. I will use my technical experience to develop innovative therapies and coordinate product launches more effectively. Product management will prepare me to launch a neurological technology venture.

The Stanford MBA offerings will help me realize my goals better than any other business school. I’m most excited to participate in *Start-up Garage*, where I will use my software engineering expertise to help my classmates by validating ideas, proposing technical solutions, and building prototypes, and I will gain first-hand developing, financing, and bringing ideas to market. Drawing from my experience at Dexcom conducting interviews to vet software engineer candidates, I can help my classmates in the Product Club find the "builders" for their ideas. I will study *Biodesign Innovation* to gain practical experience applying my computer science expertise to invent new health technology products while collaborating with students from interdisciplinary fields. Stanford’s flexible curriculum will enable me to take courses in the School of Medicine to deepen my understanding of neurology.

One pervasive problem in regulated industries is that organizations adopt processes and develop cultures that restrict corporate agility, thus stymieing disruptive innovation. Dexcom grew around one core product technology and struggled to create disruptive products. In *Beyond Disruption: Entrepreneurial Leadership Within Existing Organizations*, I will learn how to be an effective “intrapreneur” and drive cultural change while maintaining the core business. In the *Leadership Lab*, I will develop the ability to persuade personnel to get out of procedural ruts.

The large-scale health challenges I seek to address demand seamless collaboration across interdisciplinary fields—something Stanford excels at more than anywhere else.

*Start-up Garage* will give me first-hand experience developing, financing, and bringing ideas to market.

(Other Stanford-specific offerings here)

Courses:

* ~~Startup garage~~
* Innovation & management in healthcare
  + Access to products, becoming aware of innovations and integrating new ideas into the healthcare structure
  + Financing and managing new product development
* ~~Beyond disruption: Entrepreneurial leadership within existing organizations~~
* ~~Biodesign innovation series (both quarters)~~
  + research and validate real-world medical needs, invent new health technology products to address them, and plan for their implementation into patient care
* Strategic management of technology and innovation in established software firms
  + Intrapraneurship
  + “break out of co-evolutionary lock-in with their mainstream product-market environment”
  + “the strategic leadership challenges associated with trying to develop new growth opportunities that require significant cultural change”
* ~~Leadership lab -> persuade people to not stay stuck in regulatory trenches~~
* ~~Courses in the School of Medicine~~
* Product/market fit
* Interpersonal dynamics

Talents that I may want to weave in:

* Quickly assess a situation, but have a willingness to listen to mentors and listen to sound advice. Some news feed post isn’t going to influence me, I’m going to make my own decisions.
* Not a crowd lemming. Not a knowledge lemming
* Very curious. Like to learn new things. How does this thing fit with that thing
* Give me the boundaries and move them to a new planet and deal with them there
* Background gives me compassion and space for people to be different and allow them. You can get something from a lot of different people. (one of the benefits of coming from struggle). Extra dose of compassion for others that need something.

Just blows my mind the things offered here are not offered other places

Culture of connection for people who will help me after school

Add human to the essays – thinking bigger and grander, realizing I need a posse to do it. I want to be with people who are bigger and smarter and better than me so I can learn from them and they can learn from me.