**My Thoughts on Last Lecture**

In a typical inspirational speech I hear what I call the Three Steps to Achieving Dreams. They are: 1) Make concrete goals, 2) Work hard to achieve those goals and 3) Live happily ever after. While Randy acknowledges these three steps, he also approaches the inspirational speech more realistically and honestly.

He admits life doesn’t always turn out the way we expect no matter how much we prepare or how hard we work. However, we have the power to achieve our dreams when we are willing to work around the obstacles we cannot change or overcome. He does this in his own life when he takes a journalist position to experience zero gravity. He may not have achieved his dream the way he originally planned, but he got there in what is arguably a more interesting way. What I find so impressive about this is, he doesn’t sugarcoat the message. Yes, life is hard and yes, life throws dents in our plans, but we can also make adjustments to achieve our dreams. Sometimes, we might need to make adjustments to the dreams themselves (becoming Captain Kirk for instance) but that doesn’t make the journey any less rewarding. I think this message shows we are all capable of finding beauty in negative situations and that thinking realistically doesn’t mean you have to be cynical.

I have to admit, I was a little intimidated by the title of this video because I have no idea what my childhood dreams - or even what my current dreams- are. As a returning college student, I was afraid of walking away with a sense of dread but Randy mangaded to inspire me with his use of loopholes. I can work around my problems like he did. Instead of thinking “I don’t know what my dreams are right now”, I can put a positive twist on it and say, “One of my dreams is to find more dreams!” That way, instead of feeling helpless for not having a dream, I can focus on finding one.

**My Thoughts on Mindset**

Before I took the quiz, I assumed mindset simply referred to a positive or negative attitude but now I appearate its complexity. I scored a 36, which means I have a growth-mindset with some fixed ideas (however I don’t view these ideas as negative). I agreed with the quiz statements about intelligence but disagreed with some of the statements about personality and talent.

I believe our intelligence is something we have control over as a large part of intelligence is education and open-mindedness. Often we are encouraged to pursue the things we are already good at but I believe we can enjoy the things we struggle to succeed in. In my own life, I’ve possessed a talent for writing and difficulty with math and science. From elementary school to college, I was always encouraged to pursue writing and avoid math and science courses. I don’t want to avoid these courses because, while I do have to work harder at them, I find them rewarding and interesting. I do not agree with our culture, which I perceive as suggesting we should focus on what we're good at, because the possibilities for what we can learn are limitless. On the other hand, I agree it is tempting to study exclusively what we are good at in order to protect our egos. This is a dangerous temptation as closing our minds can reduce our intelligence by encouraging ignorance.

I understand talent as a natural aptitude towards something. While I believe anyone can develop skills, I think talent is something we are born with (but the only way to improve is through hard work). I also believe, while we can change some aspects of our personality for the better, we have fundamental qualities we cannot change. For example, I have always been a reserved person. I used to have severe social anxiety and I overcame this through prolonged exposure to social situations. While I am more comfortable around people than I used to be, I cannot force myself to become a raging extrovert. I am also on the Autism Spectrum which means, even if I wanted to be a neurotypical person, I could not change the structure of my brain to achieve this. However, I can engage in some practices to help reduce my anxiety and improve my social skills. As someone with ASD, I’ve worked hard to improve my mental health but don’t believe I have to improve who I am fundamentally. So I don’t perceive the “fixed” aspects of my mindset as negative. I just believe we should improve what we can and learn to appreciate what we cannot.

**My Thoughts on Learning Styles**

As someone with ASD, I believe learning styles have a huge impact on our education and development. I often struggle to pay attention in class and used to get in trouble for this as an undiagnosed child with Autism. After my failure to keep up with the other children in math class, I was sent to Title 1. Instead of lecturing, my Title 1 teacher gave me a problem and had me solve it through trial and error. After learning through this hands-on technique, my teachers were amazed to find I scored above average on my standardized tests. One simple adjustment towards my learning style brought me from far below average to above average in the course of one year.

**Certificate of Completion**