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The Last Lecture

It is genuinely difficult to describe exactly how Randy Pausch’s Last Lecture made me feel. Perhaps because I am a mother to three young boys. Or that my children and I all have a rare genetic connective-tissue disease accompanied by a plethora of subpar spin-offs, including a heart aneurysm for my youngest that is a watch and wait game—I’ve never been very good at those. Or that I have severe OCD, namely obsessive, with a constant barrage of horrifyingly realistic, and morbidly specific, harming, and sexual obsessions that cause an onslaught of fear, anxiety, and the stinging tears brought by the ever-pressing reality of death. Or even that my father has had so many near-death medical problems, including a major heart surgery after the massive stroke he suffered when my eldest sister committed suicide last year. Maybe part of my indecision stems from my own guilt-ridden ambiguity regarding the lives, and thus future deaths, of my parents and siblings, especially as I am still doing C-PTSD treatment for a childhood full of atrocities that still haunt my sleep. Conceivably, it is due to a difference in the wiring of my brain, that I am autistic, even if I ***did*** just officially find out. Whichever way, I am torn, and Randy’s last line did much of the tearing.

Randy Pausch showed an exuberance for life that I’m not accustomed to seeing. The way he described his passions and childhood dreams has left me feeling hollow and wanting for more, pondering if I can even recall any dreams, or if I just simply existed in fight or flight, waiting for an escape. So, because again, I am a mother, my thoughts turn toward my own children. How can I further foster this vivacity for life and ever-present curiosity in my boys? How can I help ***them*** achieve ***their*** dreams? What can I impart on them that will make a difference? I have grappled with this question since the moment I discovered I was pregnant with my oldest 16 years ago. How do I do right by my young? How do I raise confident, kind, loving people who always feel safe and secure in the knowledge of my own belief in them?

Randy helped to finally answer this question for me tonight: I follow ***my*** childhood dreams of the attention and love I yearned for from my own family and live vicariously through the hearts of my own, knowing that they will have the undying support, belief, engagement, devotion and challenge they need to grow. Whether I am here tomorrow or not, my boys can stand firm on the foundation we’ve built together. I believe it is strong enough to ensure their faith in the possibility of fulfilling even their wildest dreams.