

Oprah Winfrey's speech at Stanford Lesson 3:

(from 21:46 to 25:04)

Not a small topic this is, finding happiness. But in some ways I think it's the simplest of all. Gwendolyn Brooks wrote a poem for her children. It's called "*Speech to the Young: Speech to the Progress-Toward.*" And she says at the end, "Live not for battles won. / Live not for the-end-of-the-song. / Live in the along." She's saying, like Eckhart Tolle, that you have to live for the present. You have to be in the moment. Whatever has happened to you in your past has no power over this present moment, because life is now.

But I think she's also saying, be a part of something. Don't live for yourself alone. This is what I know for sure: In order to be truly happy, you must live along with and you have to stand for something larger than yourself. Because life is a reciprocal exchange. To move forward you have to give back. And to me, that is the greatest lesson of life. To be happy, you have to give something back.

I know you know that, because that's a lesson that's woven into the very fabric of this university. It's a lesson that Jane and Leland Stanford got and one they've bequeathed to you. Because all of you know the story of how this great school came to be, how the Stanfords lost their only child to typhoid at the age of 15. They had every right and they had every reason to turn their backs against the world at that time, but instead, they channeled their grief and their pain into an act of grace. Within a year of their son's death, they had made the founding grant for this great school, pledging to do for other people's children what they were not able to do for their own boy.

The lesson here is clear, and that is, if you're hurting, you need to help somebody else ease their hurt. If you're in pain, help somebody else's pain. And when you're in a mess, you get yourself out of the mess helping somebody out of theirs. And in the process, you get to become a member of what I call the greatest fellowship of all, the sorority of compassion and the fraternity of service.

The Stanfords had suffered the worst thing any mom and dad can ever endure, yet they understood that helping others is the way we help ourselves. And this wisdom is increasingly supported by scientific and sociological research. It's no longer just woo-woo soft-skills talk. There's actually a helper's high, a spiritual surge you gain from serving others. So, if you want to feel good, you have to go out and do some good.

But when you do good, I hope you strive for more than just the good feeling that service provides, because I know this for sure, that doing good actually makes you better. So, whatever field you choose, if you operate from the paradigm of service, I know your life will have more value and you will be happy.