Commencement address by Steve Jobs, delivered on June 12 to the Stanford class of 2005

I'm honored to be with you today for your commencement from one of the finest universities in the world. Truth be told, I never graduated from college, and this is the closest I've ever gotten to a college graduation. Today, I want to tell you three stories from my life. That's it. No big deal. Just three stories.

**The first story is about connecting the dots.**

I dropped out of Reed College after the first 6 months, but then stayed around as a drop-in for another 18 months or so before I really quit. So why did I drop out?

It started before I was born. My biological mother was a young, unwed college graduate student, and she decided to put me up for adoption. She felt very strongly that I should be adopted by college graduates, so everything was all set for me to be adopted at birth by a lawyer and his wife -- except that when I popped out they decided at the last minute that they really wanted a girl.

So my parents, who were on a waiting list, got a call in the middle of the night asking: “We’ve got an unexpected baby boy; do you want him?” They said: “Of course.” My biological mother found out later that my mother had never graduated from college and that my father had never graduated from high school. She refused to sign the final adoption papers. She only relented a few months later when my parents promised that I would go to college. This was the start in my life.

And 17 years later I did go to college. But I naively chose a college that was almost as expensive as Stanford….After six months, I couldn’t see the value in it. I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life and no idea how college was going to help me figure it out…. So I decided to drop out and trust that it would all work out OK. It was pretty scary at the time, but looking back, it was one of the best decisions I ever made. The minute I dropped out, I could stop taking the required classes that didn’t interest me, and begin dropping in on the ones that looked far more interesting....

Reed College at that time offered perhaps the best calligraphy instruction in the country…. I decided to take a calligraphy class to learn how to do this. I learned about serif and san serif typefaces, about varying the amount of space between different letter combinations, about what makes great typography great. It was beautiful, historical, artistically subtle in a way that science can’t capture, and I found it fascinating….

But ten years later, when we were designing the first Macintosh computer, it all came back to me. And we designed it all into the Mac. It was the first computer with beautiful typography. If I had never dropped in on that single course in college, the “Mac” would have never had multiple typefaces or proportionally spaced fonts. And since Windows just copied the Mac, it’s likely that no personal computer would have them…. Of course it was impossible to connect the dots looking forward when I was in college. But it was very, very clear looking backwards ten years later.

Again, you can’t connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something -- your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever -- because believing that the dots will connect down the road will give you the confidence to follow your heart, even when it leads you off the well-worn path, and that will make all the difference..

**My second story is about love and loss.**

I was lucky – I found what I loved to do early in life. Woz and I started *Apple* in my parents’ garage….and in 10 years Apple had grown from just the two of us in a garage into into a $2 billion company with over 4000 employees. We had just released our finest creation – the Macintosh – a year earlier, and I had just turned 30.

And then I got fired. How can you get fired from a company you started? Well, as Apple grew, we hired someone who I thought was very talented to run the company with me, and for the first year or so things went well. But then our visions of the future began to diverge and eventually we had a falling out. When we did, our Board of Directors sided with him. So at 30 I was out. And very publicly out. What had been the focus of my entire adult life gone, and it was devastating….

But something slowly began to dawn on me – I still loved what I did... And so I decided to start over...

During the next five years, I started a company named NeXT another company named *Pixar*. Pixar went on to create the world’s first computer-animated film, *Toy Story*, and is now the most successful animation studio in the world. In a remarkable turn of events, Apple bought NeXT, and I returned to Apple, and the technology we developed at NeXT is at the heart of Apple’s current renaissance…

I’m pretty sure none of this would have happened if I hadn’t been fired from Apple… Sometimes life’s going to hit you in the head with a brick. Don’t lose faith. I’m convinced that the only thing that kept me going was that I loved what I did. You’ve got to find what you love…Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven’t found it yet, keep looking – and don’t settle… As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it. So keep looking -- don’t settle.

**My third story is about death…**

Remembering that I’ll be dead soon is the most important tool I’ve ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life. Because almost everything – all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure – these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important…

About a year ago I was diagnosed with cancer. I had a scan at 7:30 in the morning, and it clearly showed a tumor in my pancreas. The doctors told me this was almost certainly a type of cancer that is incurable, and that I should expect to live no longer than three to six months. My doctor advised me to go home and get my affairs in order, which is doctor’s code for “prepare to die”…

I lived with that diagnosis all day. Later that evening I had a biopsy… When they viewed the cells under a microscope,… it turned out to be a very rare form of pancreatic cancer that is curable with surgery. I had the surgery and, thankfully, I’m fine now….

No one wants to die. Even people who want to go to heaven don’t want to die to get there. And yet death is the destination we all share. No one has ever escaped it. And that is as it should be, because Death is very likely the single best invention of Life. It is Life’s change agent. It clears out the old to make way for the new. Right now the new is you, but someday not too long from now, you will gradually become the old and be cleared away…

Your time is limited, so don’t waste it living someone else’s life. Don’t be trapped by dogma -- which is living with the results of other people’s thinking. Don’t let the noise of others’ opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become….

When I was young, there was an amazing publication called *The Whole Earth Catalogue*, which was one of the “bibles” of my generation. It was created by a fellow named Stewart Brand not far from here in Menlo Park, and he brought it to life with his poetic touch….

On the back cover of their final issue was a photograph of an early morning country road, the kind you might find yourself hitchhiking on if you were so adventurous. Beneath it were the words: “Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish.” It was their farewell message as they signed off… I have always wished that for myself. And now, as you graduate to begin anew, I wish that for you.

Stay hungry. Stay foolish.

Jobs, Steve. "Commencement Address at Stanford University delivered 12 June 2005, Palo Alto, CA." American Rhetoric. http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/stevejobsstanfordcommencement.htm (accessed 13 September 2010).