

The Last Lecture Reflection

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I think it was brave of Professor Pausch to share his innermost thoughts, life story, and fears so openly. Randy decided to be vulnerable, even when he had only had a short time to live. He put his kids first, and as he said, he communicated in the best way he knew, as a lecturer. The book was a bit of an emotional roller coaster. Randy took us to heights of joy in stories about his marriage, kids, and family. He plunged into the realities of his cancer, mortality, and the purpose of this effort as his way of contributing to the lives of his family after he has passed. The power of positive thought was one recurring theme that granted him strength and power. The importance of leading by example is another recurring theme that speaks to effective leadership. Prioritization and focusing on what is essential are consistently at the root of his decision-making. Focus is how we overcome obstacles or metaphorical brick walls. We can always change our plan, but only if we have one. With the right mindset and a positive attitude, we will be happy with whatever life presents.

When Randy almost lost Jai during one of the births, they never said, “this isn’t fair,” but instead said, “let’s saddle up and ride.” This upbeat, cohesive attitude was displayed again when they saw Randy’s records and learned that his pancreas was full of tumors. He takes a page out of the Disney playbook when he says, “The park is open until 8,” focusing on the park being open rather than when it closes. Randy’s love of Disney shows again in his question, “Are you a Tigger or an Eeyore?” I like this because most folks know both characters and their personalities. It is a great way to ask someone if they are being positive or gloomy in their perspective.

I loved the story about his brand-new convertible and the visits with his niece and nephew. Dumping the soda in his new car was a rousing and effective way to underscore that things are just things, and people are more important. It also freed his nephew from anxiety when later he

became sick in the car. The unimportance of things appeared again when he was not upset by Jai backing into his car when he was at work. I believe his attitude is healthy, assuming the vehicle doesn't become a complete eyesore.

I am not sure if I was charged twice at the grocery that I would have had the fortitude to keep on walking. Randy did just that, figuring that his 15 minutes were more valuable than his \$16. He does support his sentiment that time must be explicitly managed like money when he walks away. There is something to say about spending your time on the right things. Multitasking while on hold is an excellent way to economize time. Making calls at the right time, like 15 minutes before the top of the hour, is a perfect way to keep a call short.

Randy's delegation example is when he gives his young daughter the responsibility of holding her bottle. I think of this as some of his “carrying around the largest stuffed animal at the fair” wisdom, perhaps showing his quirkier side. I prefer giving people a fine reputation to live up to and then giving them the space to complete their tasks. I appreciate his insistence on taking a time out. He tells the story of his in-laws buffering phone calls while he and Jai were on their honeymoon. I, too, prefer to unplug when taking vacation time. Blocking yourself from work is a vital factor in recharging.

The head fake. Randy tells a story where a group of girls learned to write code through an activity disguised as storytelling. This story reminded me of Scouting, where we apply the idea of “fun with a purpose” to teach the youth life skills through games and fun activities. Randy showed his appreciation for the Scouting program when he said, “Becoming an Eagle Scout is one of the only things from childhood you can put on your resume at 50.” Citing the importance of being earnest, he tries to hire Eagle Scouts when he sees this accomplishment on resumes.

When Randy recommends starting by sitting together, he is getting to the root of improving group dynamics within his class. He gets a little upset for effect to convey the message to the students; start sitting together and acting as groups. Team cohesion was his desired result. Randy's advice to "Watch what they do, not what they say." is another version of "Actions speak louder than words.", which I consider a universal truth. The method to send out thin mints is a novel idea and likely very effective when levied appropriately. Sending written thank-you notes is a lost art, and non-mainstream ways are often very effective.

Putting older kids to work as baseball umpires for little league was brilliant. The older kids appreciate the difficulty of the job while helping the younger kids. The younger kids see the older kids as role models showing good examples of volunteerism. Randy states that rights come from our community, and we have a responsibility to the community. The example of jury duty supports this notion. Everyone believes they have the right to a jury trial as guaranteed in the Constitution, but then make people attempt to shirk their jury duty when called. When summoned, we would be well served to remember Randy's beliefs to tell the truth all the time and that no job is beneath us.

Do not concern yourself with how to chase your dreams because if you live your life the right way, your dreams will come to you. This thought is profound. Our quality of life is determined not by obtaining material things but by attaining experiences and connections. Our outcomes will be negative or positive based on our perspective. "Don't complain, just work harder" underscores the importance of efficient directing of energy. Randy shares great thoughts and attitudes for living a full life, and I hope his children can feel their father's love that he eloquently captures in his last lecture.