

2019 Spring Commencement Speech

May 4, 2019 | Katie Holmes

Thank you, Class of 2019, for having me. Congratulations on all of your hard work; it's really nice to be back home in Toledo. It's a little bit strange talking to a bunch of people that probably already know parts of my life story. I didn't have time to look up all of you on Facebook beforehand, so you guys have the advantage. Even though I didn't go here, I do have secondhand experience, as I witnessed my older brother attend law school here. He lived at home, and I remember being 14 years old, watching my brother live on cans of pork and beans, staying up all hours of the night reading incredibly long books about Constitutional Law and tort reform. To give the University of Toledo College of Law some credit, he was a sleep-deprived mess, but he seemed to be very well-educated. At the time, I wondered if my 14-year old problems were really that important, but he always reassured me that they were. He always took the time to drive me around, give me brotherly advice and threaten to subpoena anyone who bullied me.

So in a way, I had a vicarious education into what school should teach you - the value of consistency, sticking to your commitments, and making time to take care of others. When I was in eighth grade, I went to Notre Dame, and my dad was the coach of our basketball team, Christ the King Raiders. And I remember that in the championship game, we were up against this team of girls that were all at least two inches taller than us. And he called us into a huddle and said, "I don't want any of you to be scared. And you'd better not play scared out there." Really, we were

more scared of him than anyone else. But we went out, and defeated those Amazonian girls by one basket. A few years later, I was getting ready to go out and host SNL as a 21-year-old, and I was really nervous and really scared, and my dad was there in New York before the show. And he came up to me and said, “Just have fun and be yourself; they’re lucky to have you.” And in that moment, I wasn’t scared.

When I was auditioning for my first acting job in LA, my mom came with me, and when we were there we met a lot of kids my age. Once, at a grocery store, I became surrounded by young actors who had lived in L.A. for years. They asked about my previous acting experience, and I didn’t have any. My mom kind of brusquely ushered me out of there and said, “Well, we’re

When you're in the middle of a natural disaster, pay close attention to directions. I remember seeing a hurricane warning on TV, and it said, buy water AND also fill your tub. So what I did was buy a huge pack of Poland Spring water bottles, and then later when I was pouring the water into the tub, I realized, this is probably not what they meant.

Even though my friends told me to stick my jeans in the freezer to clean them, it just made them stiff. So don't do that.

I used to sell a bunch of my clothes and then use the money I got from doing that to buy more clothing. I was losing a lot of money, but I

But more than the essentials, i.e. a dish set and a windshield scraper, make sure you have someone who's going to be in your corner. Be grateful for the people who push you. I used to know this producer who always set me up on meetings and tried to get me to go to auditions. for parts I thought I had no chance of getting, and after a while her confidence started working on me and I was going to those daunting auditions by myself and for myself. If people believe in you, it makes you want to believe in yourself, and vice versa. People react to your confidence. I've been tricking folks into believing I'm other characters for years now, and I haven't gotten caught yet! Guys, it's all fake!

I worked on a play with a famously intense director who kept pushing the cast to rehearse our lines over and over and over until they didn't even sound like sentences anymore and we were just shouting angry syllables at each other. He was very demanding; often in acting, directors will say something like, "let's take a soft 15 minutes;" he would say, "let's take a hard 15 seconds. But, by the time we opened, the cast had totally grown as actors together, and we felt the hard work had all paid off. And then, when I directed my own movie, I used some of the same techniques as that director. I pushed myself and my actors just as hard, because I knew it would make us all better in the end. Because I am a kind person, I let them come in 15 minutes late with Starbucks sometimes. I know you guys would never do that; you all seem very punctual.

So do the best you can with what you have to work with. Because you have a lot to work with - more than you might know. You've all be

I've been so lucky in life to know people who have given me their wisdom, experience and advice while I was growing up. My family has welcomed me home every time and sent me