

Molly Lyons || Grad Speech 2022

The other day I was driving home from Massachusetts with my dad after a long weekend of rowing. I was mentally and physically exhausted, which was why I didn't fight him when he wanted to play his music. Like I have since I was little, I tuned out most of his Pearl Jam and Led Zeppelin since those bands aren't really my speed. After a couple of long and painful songs, "Beautiful Boy" by John Lennon began to play. I was thankful for this change of pace and found myself listening to what the former Beatle had to say. That's when I heard this line:

"Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans" (John Lennon).

These words made me think about our class. Looking back at our four years, I feel like we spent so much of our time at RHS telling ourselves that things will be better

once we get over some sort of hump. “Things will be better once we’re not the youngest in the school; I can’t wait until we don’t have to deal with online classes anymore; I’m counting down the days until my college applications are done.” Yes, many of these “humps” were less than favorable, but today, I want to talk about how beautifully transformative our class has been throughout these four years, and how those “humps” have allowed us to become one of the most resilient, kind, and impressive classes RHS has ever seen.

I remember how terrifying freshman year was for me: new school, new teachers, new classmates, new responsibilities. However, with all of these scary “news” came new opportunities. While some of us were so keyed into trying to navigate this intimidating new environment, others were taking full advantage of the opportunity to

create a foundation for greatness. By getting involved in clubs, sports, music, theater, or volunteering, many of you were able to take initiative and take your first step in your high school journey. These small steps allowed us to blossom into the strong students and leaders that sit here today. This room is filled with future CEOs, doctors, musicians, professional athletes, politicians, and people who will truly make a difference in the world. This transformation happened right under all of our noses, and I hope that you can sit here today and appreciate how much we have evolved as a class from freshman to senior year.

I feel like it would be remiss of me to not mention one of the most impactful humps we have had to deal with during our time here at RHS, which is COVID. No one expected it, no one wanted it, and most importantly, no

one really knew how to navigate it. A lot of our time was spent planning what school would be like when it “returned to normal,” not knowing if it ever would. All of this negative attention took away from one of the most beautiful things that happened to our class; we learned the importance of support and developing meaningful relationships. Things like daily walks, hour-long facetimes, and socially-distanced hangouts allowed us to help one another get through this confusing time and create bonds that will last a lifetime. Not only did the arduous nature of COVID connect our class for life, but it also emphasized how positive an impact others can have on your journey. As a class, we became more compassionate, caring, and supportive individuals because of this “hump,” and we will continue to create future relationships with these valuable skills.

Even after “returning to normal,” life continued to change. Many of us had to deal with loss, rejection, and separation. Hell, we witnessed the start of a war and continue to watch the devastating effects. With all of these seemingly impossible humps, our class still managed to make a difference. We saw that the world could be a better place and did something about it. We raised support for muscular dystrophy, we gave blood to local hospitals, we sent money to Ukraine, we even pledged to make our community a No Place for Hate. All of this good came from something bad, and it came from all of you. Without darkness, there is no light, and our class proves that we can and will make this world a little brighter.

No journey is ever straight or smooth. There will always be turns, bumps, and times we wish we could skip. As I close up this speech, my advice to you is to embrace

those humps and learn to enjoy the now. We all have so much to look forward to, whether that be college or jobs, or summer trips, but I promise you will get more out of life if you take full advantage of what's right in front of you.

So, enjoy today. Enjoy tonight. Tell the people who are here with you and here *for* you how much you love them.

Soak in the fact that you've just graduated. Look around at the people sitting next to you. Whether you met these people in Kindergarten or high school, take the time to celebrate the meaningful relationships you have developed and let your friends know how much they mean to you.

This is the last time we will all be together as one, so cherish this moment. Each and every one of you contributed something special to this class and are more than ready to take on life with the lessons we have learned

and the memories we have made from RHS. Thank you
and good luck, Class of 2022!