

SP 59th Grad Session 3 - DBA, DBID, DIB

Wilson Tan 2 May 2019, 5pm (v4A)

Mr Soh Wai Wah

Principal and Chief Executive Officer, Singapore Polytechnic

Distinguished Guests

Parents and Graduands

Staff of Singapore Polytechnic

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Afternoon.

This is a proud day and moment for you, our graduands. Your parents, love ones and friends, lecturers and mentors, share this very special occasion with you. Congratulations!

I am certain that you have heard many hours of lectures, advice and guidance. I am also very certain that you can give an excellent account on how to move your life forward. Honestly, you cannot wait to get out of here and do the things that you really want to do. Allow me to be brief and cover just 3 points, like every lecture that you have been to.

The 3 points are: Be Curious, Be Creative and Make Choices.

Be Curious

You must have heard that 'Curiosity killed the cat.' However, there is a rejoinder to that, which is 'but satisfaction brought it back.' Perhaps this is

an indication that a cat has 9 lives and can keep on finding out and experimenting.

In today's environment, we are constantly inundated with new technology, evolving transformation, disruptive business models and a host of other developments. There is therefore a need for us to be curious and stretch out our neck, get a little uncomfortable and perhaps, even vulnerable.

If we are not prepared to be curious and investigate, we will be in a cocoon and may not be in a learning situation. We will be trapped in our comfort zone and cannot be exposed to the wonderful changes that is happening around us. We become passive and will literally perished if our mind and spirit are not kept inquisitive, curious and active. It is this trait that keeps us observant. Therefore, nurture the passion to experiment and allow us to experience the new world that is before us.

Keep an open mind, ask questions and the whys (of course, in a polite and professional manner.) Don't take matters for granted – push the limits and see where it can bring you. We know that we will need to be continuously in a learning mode and being curious will keep the fun in learning and living.

Be Creative

Allow your curiosity to be the fuel and fire that cooks your creativity. Being curious is insufficient for one's success. Exercise your curiosity and develop it into creative possibilities.

Learn how to see and do things differently – allow that creative streak to make the difference in your life.

Being creative helps us to become better problem solvers. It allows us to see possibilities and potentials. It allows us to solve problems. The ability to think outside the box is an important talent and provide fresh perspectives that many organizations are prepared to invest in.

Creative thinking is a companion to critical thinking. It transcends barriers and breaks traditions. Conventional and traditional mindsets tend to lock us down to thinking that are tried and tested. It fails to consider the vast and myriad changes and the new arsenals that we can deploy that is before us.

Being creative means that we are prepared to push the boundaries and not be afraid to be challenged or even perhaps face the fact that we could be wrong. Being creative, makes one a problem solver. The more creative we get; the chances are that we will see more successes. This can make us a happier and more confident person. You owe it to yourself to become that person!

So, unlock the innate creativity that is inside you, challenge assumptions and move beyond the conventional barriers.

Make Choices

Some of you will soon be heading to the army, serving our nation in different roles and capacity. Some will perhaps join the workforce before making other plans. Others may consider furthering their education.

All of these involve choices!

Your core values and goals are important in making choices. Consider them carefully. It is worthwhile to write them down as this will help you to

organize and crystalize your thoughts. There are many paths that can lead you to your goals; some will agree with your value system while other may not. Choose the paths that are aligned with your core values. Do not be someone else. Be yourself!

Do share your plans with family members, friends and mentors. They can share perspectives that you may not have considered. There will be areas that you know and feel comfortable. However, there are also other areas that you may be unfamiliar. Consider their views and with the collective wisdom and insights, you can make better and more informed decisions. So, train your own listening skills, be discerning, make choices that are agreeable to your core values; it can lead you to new and higher grounds!

Once you make a choice, stick with it and see it through. The going maybe tough but remind yourself that it was your own choice. You have given it the necessary due diligence and a thorough consideration. You owe it to yourself to persevere and see through the outcome.

Let me end by sharing about an alumnus, Mr Mohamed Abbas, who graduated in 2010 from this school with a double diploma in Banking and Financial Services and Specialist Diploma in Applied Business Psychology. He has kindly allowed me to share his story.

Abbas' father sells roti-prata for a living and he lived in challenging circumstances during his growing up days with his 2 sisters. His parents needed 2-3 jobs working 18 hours day to make ends meet. Abbas took on part time jobs to reduce the burden on his family. After Singapore Polytechnic, he went on to study Banking and Finance at Nanyang Technological University.

Today, Abbas is a serial entrepreneur and currently runs two companies in the financial sector that he has co-founded. He has received numerous citations. Let me cite a few:

- National Youth Achievement Gold Award
- Forbes 30 under 30 Asia list for Finance & Venture Capital Category
- Huray Gold Medal Award for Social Responsibility by NTU
- List of 21 Remarkable Financial Technology Founders under 35 years in Southeast Asia

Besides being a Fin-tech entrepreneur, Abbas actively serves our community on a regular basis. For example, serving the elderly at the Moral Home of the Aged Sick, organizing free health screening for the underprivileged; and serving and befriending the foreign workers community.

He is a beacon that we can emulate. His quests to learn, being curious and applying his knowledge in a creative manner allow him to come up with relevant and disruptive business applications.

I ask him what he can say to this graduating class. And he said, I quote “Life is about choices and decisions we make. There are so many opportunities in Singapore, you have the choice to grab those opportunities, learn and impact the communities or let it pass by”; unquote.

This evening enjoy what you have achieved, be merry. Dance like no one is watching, sing like no one is listening; you deserve it! Continue to shoot for the stars and have a wonderful and fulfilling life ahead!

Thank you!