

MITOCW | MIT3_091F18_outro_300k

I'm going to give you some closing comments.

I started this semester off in the first lecture, and I asked you all a question.

And the question was, why are you here?

And I said really, really, really, why are you here.

Why did you come to MIT?

And I asked you, did you come here so you can just phone it in, get a stamp in four years, and go out?

Did you come here so you can walk around some place in privilege and look down on other people?

That is not why you're here.

That is not why you came to MIT.

You came to MIT because you know that this is where we will make the transition from being able to answer any question to knowing which question to ask.

That's the transition from student to scholar.

And you know that you came here because you have a passion, and you want to come to a place where you can take that passion and you can try to solve really hard problems together to make the world a better place.

Those are reasons why you came here.

You came here because you know that progress does not happen because of success.

It doesn't.

It happens entirely because of what you choose to do with failure.

That's MIT, that's the MIT way, and that's why you're here, and I asked you to think about that on the first lecture.

And then I gave you a whole lot of examples throughout the class.

I tried to connect our learning and solid state chemistry to global challenges, to global challenges that we face.

And I tried to do that.

So I had 36 opportunities.

There's many more, so I had to pick and choose carefully to try to give you a sense of some of these things.

And the thing is about these challenges, one I just talked about in many others, it's not that these are things that we need to do soon.

There is an urgency of now about these things.

There is an urgency of now.

There's no more time to talk about it.

And so these challenges, it's not like something happens over here, happens over there.

These are planetary challenges.

These cover the whole thing.

So it's all on the table.

It's all on the line.

And by the way, if it's a planetary challenge, it means the challenge doesn't care if you're in a blue State or a red State or if you live in Europe or Africa or here.

It doesn't care.

So we better figure out how to get our act together and work together to solve these very hard problems.

And that's why you're here.

That's why you're here.

And so on the first lecture, I asked you to think about why you're here, and on this very last lecture, I'm asking you to think about what you want to do about that.

What do you want to do about that?

And there's a lot of things you can do.

I don't mean that you have to work on one of these things we've talked about in this class.

That's not what I mean.

I mean, think about what it is that you really want to do and how you want to do it, and then go for it.

You might have figured that out before you came here.

You may know-- gesundheit-- already way before you got here.

You may be figuring it out right now.

You may have no clue what you want to do when you graduate.

All of those are fine.

But what I want to leave you with is a framework and some thinking that what can I leave you with as a suggestion, as a framework.

And it really comes down to three ingredients, three ingredients that I'm asking you to think about when you go off and do, when you leave here, when you go off and do.

What are you going to do?

How are you going to frame this?

And so the first ingredient is kindness.

Now OK.

Bear with me.

Because you're all thinking, what is he talking about?

This is a chemistry class, and you're talking about kindness.

But you see, the thing is, I'm trying to think about what is a framework that if you follow it you will do good.

You will help change this world for the better, which is what we do at MIT.

It's how we think.

And the thing is I don't care if you define kindness as love or as helping someone or as community or as on one of those dates when the candle was in the room and you did the calculation and you saved the day because you knew oxygen was going to run out.

That's all kindness.

All of that is kindness.

But the thing is that if you have kindness in what you do, it's really hard to do bad.

Is that under the hood?

Is there an element of kindness?

You can't have too much of it.

We need that vector.

We need that vector in this world.

So that's one ingredient, and the second ingredient is knowledge.

Now, what I mean by this is acquisition of knowledge.

And we have done a lot of that here in this class, and you do a lot of that at MIT, and we celebrate these acquisitions.

What I'm asking you to do is think about this as you go forward.

How are you acquiring knowledge?

How are you learning?

That sounds cliché.

Always learn.

You guys have to keep doing that.

You have to keep doing that because, for you, it's nourishment, and it's another one of these vectors.

You can't do any harm by learning.

You can only do good for yourself and for everyone that you care about.

So keep doing it.

The rate might change of learning acquisition as a reaction, the rate constant might be lower.

We know places where that's already the case.

And that's OK.

Maybe the order is lower too down there, but I think they probably are learning something.

Keep that going.

And the last thing is passion.

And this involves your talents.

You all have talents already.

You all have them because that's part of who you are and why you're here.

Those are things that you bring a passion to.

What are those talents?

Maybe some of them are hidden, but work on them and pursue them.

Do things that you literally are so excited about you can't sleep sometimes because of the excitement.

That's what I'm talking about.

Follow that.

Feed it.

And while you do, lose the fear.

Avoid greed, and embrace challenge.

That's what MIT is.

That's why we're here.

So I feel like these three ingredients, I've thought about this, and I thought about these three ingredients, and I've thought about-- we have these already.

You all have these ingredients because that is also MIT, and you are here, and you are MIT.

And so what I'm asking you to do is to hold onto them and keep thinking about them.

There's a lot of reasons why I love to teach, but one of the big ones is when I think about the challenges that I share with you guys and I have 36 chances to look up in the room and I think about those challenges and I think about these ingredients and I think about all of you, I actually feel like we have a shot.

I actually feel that.