

## Wits Graduation Ceremony – Speech. 31 March 2016.

Leadership of the University of the Witwatersrand, distinguished guests, and the VIP's for today, graduates of the Faculty of Humanities...all protocol observed...

Thank you for inviting me to address you today. Forgive me if I refer to my notes. Two reasons for this, firstly my late father always said "the bluntest pencil is more accurate than the sharpest mind – write it down!". Secondly, I am a radio person, and in radio everything is scripted in 30sec links....

My name is Doug Anderson, and I am a 2 percenter. You will understand what this means in a moment. I thought I would give you a snapshot of my life and lessons I have learnt, to hopefully give you a jump start on the great things still to come in yours. Perhaps that is the first lesson I would like to share.

Successful people fail. They fail often and they fail quickly. There is no need for you to make the same mistakes.

Mom was right, you are the company you keep (what you see, hear, read all included), so choose wisely!

Success doesn't come from not making mistakes it comes from not making the same mistakes twice!

I was born with a spinal defect called Spina Bifida, which resulted in me having to use crutches until around grd 7 when I decided to use a wheelchair full time to get around easier and quicker. When I was born, Dr's gave me a 2% chance of survival. They said I wouldn't be educated. They said I wouldn't speak. They said I wouldn't have a quality of life. I share this with you to say, NEVER be limited by the limitations in the minds of others!

I was expelled in grade 1 from a mainstream school (which I shall leave nameless) because I had a disability. According to the headmaster and my grd 1 teacher, I was a risk to the school...in the event of a fire or a bomb...

My parents tried to fight the then Transvaal Education Department, and were finally ordered to place me in Hope School, which was 1 of 4 schools in the country at the time, that catered for children with disabilities.

It was at Hope School where I was exposed and able to excel in sports, academia and leadership. I share this with you to say, we can't always control what happens to us BUT we can control how we react to what happens to us. Learn to embrace change, or it will embrace you!

A very good, late friend of mine, actually the reason I am on radio always said this "Life *may* not be the party we hoped for, but while we are here, we *might as well dance*"

I was taught growing up that if you do your best, it will come with rewards. You would think that after being chosen as Headboy, after representing my province and country in sports, after achieving in academia, that this would have counted for something in the world, but the reality of the situation for me (at least at the time) was it didn't. I studied a number of things at various institutions. I had rejection after rejection trying to get a job. I had MD's say to me "you have a disability, and we are not interested". So I decided to start my own business, which then became 3.

After running these for a while, pulling family into the fold, I decided to try enter the market place again. The only job I could get was as a call centre agent...which is such a cliché. Sadly, society says that if you are blind – you become a switchboard operator, if you are a paraplegic, you become a call centre agent...but I digress. This job, believe it or not, was a saving grace for me. I only lasted a month. But in that month, an angel was seated next to me, and one morning, commented that I had a nice voice over the phone and should try get into radio. That same day, during lunch, I saw an ad in the newspaper advertising a radio course. They only took 12 people and it was a complicated process to get in, but I tried and I got in. I share this with you to say, people will want to get you down, life will sometimes get you down. The trick to success is to get up, dress up, show up and NEVER give up!

My shot at radio came shortly after, when I was directed through a friend of mine who is blind, to a community radio station that was looking for someone to do a disability related talk-show. Now remember a few minutes ago, I said that at the time, all the things I have achieved, counted for nothing... well I went for an interview and was on-air 4 days later! It all made sense now...

I was more than qualified to talk about disability! I share this with you to say, Success happens when preparation meets opportunity! One of the wisest men I ever met, who is now a close friend, was the very first person I interviewed on radio. His first words to me were “if you continue to think the way you have thought, you will continue to do the things you have done, and if you continue to do the things you have done, you will continue to get the things you have got!” If you don’t like your output in life, you have to change your input! Everything starts with the way you think!

The second piece of wisdom he shared was “you have to love something so much, that you are prepared to do it for free! BUT you have to be so damn good at what you do, that people will be prepared to pay you to do it”!!! Nothing teaches you this better than Campus radio or Community radio, as your fellow students from VOW will attest....

The only thing that will get you out of bed at 5am to work a full day for no or little pay, is PASSION! That which makes your soul happy, do that! Albert Einstein said “I have no special talents, I am only passionately curious!

My shot at commercial radio, came after 3 years of community radio, when I decided to put on a fundraiser for children with disabilities, which was very well supported by celebrities and media alike. Success, or as some call it, Luck, happens when perseverance and preparation meet opportunity! The then executive producer (a role which I now occupy) of Radio 2000 was at the event. He was impressed with what I had pulled off, found out I was on community radio and asked me to send my CV, which I did that night. It is in radio, that I have been able to educate and make a difference. Many of my achievements have come from my work, particularly in disability, on radio. I share this with you to say, you have to take the opportunity of a lifetime, in the lifetime of the opportunity! Become a NOW person. When is a good time to take action, NOW and look, even that moment is gone...I probably wouldn’t be addressing you today, if it were not for that one moment, that one choice, that one decision, that one action!

I have had 45 surgeries in 39 years. The biggest lesson I have learnt, came with operation number 40 in 2013. A simple 40min procedure...that went horribly wrong and left me in ICU for a month,

sedated and ventilated for 10 days with two super bugs. Nearly dying, gives you a different appreciation of life. I am sharing this with you to say Live more, Love more, Do more, Be more...

I have been blessed in many ways with many things. I choose to give back. I believe in the universal principle of "as you sow, you reap"...however, I also believe that the sincerity of your intentions will ALWAYS determine the success of your actions. Dont do to get, do to do...and you will be blessed. Of this I am sure.

At 38, I decided to study again, for my honours degree in journalism. This is a field that I am passionate about, a field that has allowed me to passionately make a difference to disability and people with disabilities. I share this to say, always be the student!

Oprah Winfrey said, "the biggest adventure you can take, is to live the life of your dreams"...I congratulate you on this momentous occasion, this massive milestone in your life. Today is truly the first day of the rest of your life...what you do with it is entirely up to you...

I would much rather be blind, than to have sight and no vision. I would much rather be deaf, than be able to hear but not listen. I would much rather be mute, than be able to talk but not speak out when I should. I would much rather be in a wheelchair, than be able to walk and not walk my talk...

Ladies and gents. In short, these are the pillars I live by:

1. As you think and say, you are! Thoughts lead to choices, choices lead to actions, actions lead to consequences. You are free to make choices, you are NOT free from the consequences of those choices.
2. You are the company you keep. Everything you see and hear. Garbage in, garbage out.
3. As you sow, you reap. Do not to get, do to make the world a better place than when you found it.
4. The sincerity of your intentions will ALWAYS determine the success of your actions! Do things for the right reasons!
5. You are blessed going in, you are blessed going out. You are the head not the tail, you are above not beneath and everything you put your hand to will prosper!
6. Never ever ever be limited by the limitations in the minds of others! Never let anyone limit you and be careful not to limit yourself in your thinking either!

My name is Doug Anderson, and I am a 2 percenter... Thank You!