**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**RAGHOTHAM PATLOLA**

Hello everyone!!! I would like to say that it’s a privilege to be here and share some thoughts with all of you, and especially to all of today’s graduates, on this very important moment in their lives. I want to thank \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for inviting me to be here today. Occasions like these provide the opportunity to really think about the passages of life, who we are, and where we are going. .... and since there are **NO** accidents in this life... and I believe... actually my career and effectiveness as a physician supports this principle.... that is that it’s so important to pay attention to the world around you.... to be aware.... alert.... and willing to adapt while still maintaining your integrity and standards.

So... what caught my eye in my world just a few hours ago??? I came across a quote... by that very famous author, **Anonymous**... (**Wait for the laugh**) that said, You’re always **one decision** away from a totally different life.” That’s an interesting point to consider at this pivotal moment in your development!!! Graduates, here you are, poised to take on the world. No matter your background.... and believe me, we **ALL** have one.... and no matter your circumstances.... we **ALL** have those too... **YOU** have the power to define your path in life.... but that will take vigilance, resilience, and an uncompromising willingness to observe, maintain an open mind, and adapt to situations as they present themselves throughout life. All that takes **knowledge**.

As a physician... and in particular, as a cardiologist, I have had the opportunity to .... **literally** hold life in my hands... I continue to have the chance to partner with patients in order to treat them, and let me tell you... I have experienced first hand that life can change... in a flash. That’s why I believe it’s so important to be educated.... be **INFORMED**... about yourself and life.... to have a strong foundation... an arsenal of tools that will be there to support you mentally, physically, emotionally, professionally. As you leave this school, and after the excitement and the celebrations calm down.... and they **WILL**... it will be your turn to go out there... take your places in the next chapters of your lives... and **MAKE THOSE NEXT MOVES COUNT**. It is now **YOUR** turn to plot your course, become a sponge... absorb every possible bit and byte of information that comes your way, and learn to settle for nothing less than the truth... (**Do you want to say**)... an increasingly rare commodity...

So many of us grow up with open hearts and eager minds, only to find that, through the course of youth, we tend to put our fingers a little close to the flame... we get burnt... we retreat. Your education is designed to **INFORM** you... to remind you what heat is, how it burns, and practical ways to cope... this example is all a metaphor for the experiences you will have, and whether or not you were ever a Girl Scout or a Boy Scout...that doesn’t matter.... **BE PREPARED**!!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

As we see the world is changing, as we learn to recondition ourselves to different stimulus/response behavior, the concern is that young people.... yes, **YOU**, our graduates... are building their worlds based on **reaction**.... so many young people wait for something to happen to them and then they react... it’s a natural offshoot of the tech culture we’ve all inhabited. **Listen to me**... your success and viability in life will be directly affected by your willingness to listen, learn, get involved, adapt, and **TAKE ACTION**. **YOU** are the future... **YOU** are the decision makers. **YOU** will run the world.... and even if that turns out to be a limited trajectory... your circle of friends and family... your community... your job... you have no idea how your impact and voice will spread.... now is the time to learn to take responsibility for your place in the world. Now is the time for you to begin to step outside yourselves... to imagine who you are and how you interact... as others see you... and to consciously curate your impact. Common said, “The impact of a conscious artist is necessary and it ripples through the world.” Make no mistake... we are **ALL** artists in our own right. How we choose to represent... to create... to encourage and inspire... that’s all in our power.... and we’re always one decision away from a totally different life...

I want to congratulate all of today’s graduates, thank all of you for allowing me this moment... and I wish all of you happiness, health, wisdom, and the power to make great decisions!! Thank you all!!