

To my classmates as
we graduate

Business



I want you to imagine this: you're a skydiver perched at the edge of a precipice. You've been fitted with enormous, fluttering gold nylon wings. The wind is perfect, the sky cerulean blue and cloudless, and you are ready to go. But just as you're about to push off of the ground, three flying instructors jump on you.

Each is telling you what they think is the best way to take off — each method is wildly different — and each says theirs should grant you a perfect landing. But you don't know which method to pick — and worse, you're afraid that if you choose wrong, you'll fall to your death. So, that's a little over-dramatic and probably sounds like the opening to one of those IMAX 3D movies you watch at the Museum of Science. But I've always thought that flight was an appropriate metaphor for growing up, and this time in our lives is no exception. On the verge of adulthood, we're bombarded with do's and don'ts, told we must make the “right” decisions to guarantee success and happiness, or else.

And faced with that kind of decision-making, it's easy to get scared that somehow we'll mess it up, that somehow we won't do things “right”. But the secret nobody tells you is that there is no one “right” decision. There is no singular route to happiness, and there is no such thing as a “perfect landing”. Our perception of control is illusory: we take off, we think we know exactly where we're going and how to get there, but then the wind shifts, and we have to cope with that. So in order to fly, we have to follow a very simple truth. I think Toni Morrison wrote it best.

“ If you surrender to the air, you can ride it.” Look, we’re all humans. We are not robots. There is no all-encompassing, algorithmic code for success, nor for happiness, and certainly not for perfection. And that is okay — there doesn’t have to be.

We will make a multitude of decisions in the coming years, and our only task in making those decisions is NOT, contrary to popular belief, to make the “ perfect” ones; it’s just to make them, from the heart and with the best intentions, and to see where they lead us. And that last part is hardest of all: to surrender to the unknown, and to be present in a world that is so future-oriented. So try and ride the air as it goes. Let the process be diverse. You will not have identical opportunities, experiences, or careers as the people sitting around you; that’s what makes life exciting and a little scary too. But a wise acquaintance once told me, “ Just because a door opens for someone else and not you doesn’t mean there are no doors at all.

You will have your own door.” And we will, each and every one of us. And appreciate this process from moment to moment, because the flight itself lasts a lot longer than the landing. Regardless of the future, there is one enormous thing that we all share: that our time together in high school was a piece of our journey. Here, we have teachers who gave us their knowledge, we have friends who gave their support, and we have this community, one that we have created together.

In this moment, all of our paths overlap, and they will never overlap in just that way again. This is our mutual airspace. This is a door that we all share.