

Mariah's Challenge

Thank you Leo!

When I would sit down to contemplate what I wanted to discuss with you tonight, I kept coming back to one question. What was it about YOU as an individual and YOU as a group collectively that allowed you to accomplish Mariah's Challenge? And I honestly don't think it was just one thing ... in fact, it was a bunch of things (your drive, your motivations, your commitment, the support of your parents and loved ones, and the support of your friends) ... and you accomplished this despite lots of challenges ... the largest of which I am sure was pressure from your peers and fear of rejection.

So what did you accomplish? Since taking this challenge, you committed to, and accomplished, remaining drug and alcohol free during high school. Yes, that is what you did, by what did you accomplish. My answer to that question is simple You all developed something very, very important STRENGTH OF CHARACTER.

The Greek Philosopher Heraclitus **Hera – cli – tus** said that *“Good character is not formed in a week or a month. It is created little by little, day by day. Protracted and patient effort is needed to develop good character.”*

Over these past years, you have stood up to make a statement, you have demonstrated leadership, and you, along with everyone else who has taken this challenge before you, have shown others that broken cultural norms can change. Yes Broken cultural norms can change. We all know that changing attitudes in adults and teens about underage drinking and drug use is not a sprint ... it's a marathon. And through your actions, you are helping to change that dialogue ... one day at a time ... one life at a time. Thank you for being brave!

Will Smith is credited with saying: *The best things in life are on the other side of fear!* I believe that to be true!

And I would argue that those character traits that you had to possess to accomplish Mariah's Challenge are the SAME exact traits that will guide you and

help you achieve success both in your personal and professional lives well into the future. And while I could point to many such character traits, I think that a few really stand out. I'll call them my three P's.

They are:

- Passion
- Patience
- Persistence

To illustrate the importance of the Characteristics of Passion, Patience, and Persistence, I was going to tell you some stories tonight about two really famous people. I was going to tell a story about Jack Canfield, the creator of the ***Chicken Soup for the Soul*** Series. Jack pitched ***Chicken Soup for the Soul*** to over 130 different publishers with none of them interested. In fact, his agent even dropped him after the first 100 pitches. He never gave up! Then a small publisher in Florida finally listened and gave him a chance. Now there are over 250 ***Chicken Soup for the Soul*** Books and over 500 MILLION copies sold worldwide. I was also going to tell a story about Walt Disney who was rejected over and over throughout his career and over 300 times just to finance his Micky Mouse concept. He was penniless at times. But he never gave up. Now Disney is the largest single site employer in the country and is a \$50 Billion a year enterprise. Both of these very well-known and respected personalities later in life credited their success to passion, patience, and Persistence.

But this past weekend, I learned of the death of an old friend of mine ... his name is Dr. Dan Harrington ... and he died at the age of 82. So I wanted to tell you his story tonight instead. Dan was not a medical doctor, but a PhD Doctor who taught Medical Students. Dan was never famous, his name was never in lights, there was never any glitter with Dan, but for me, Dan (even more than Jack Canfield or Walt Disney) exemplifies what it means to have passion, patience, and Persistence. Dan grew up in the Centerville area of Butte, graduated from Butte Central High School, went on to get a PhD in Anatomy, and he spent a large part of his career teaching medical students around the country. At one point, Dan recognized the challenges faced by many students both nationally and internationally who didn't have access to medical school training. At the time, several medical schools (like the famous Ross University) were popping up in the Caribbean. And Dan said ***"That's what I want to do. I want to build a medical school in the Caribbean."*** So, after years of research, many trips to various Caribbean islands, and several starts and stops, Dan established the College of Medical Sciences of St. Lucia. He didn't even get started until he was in his late

50's. But putting together a medical school was no easy task and he spent twenty plus years building his curriculum, enrolling students, instructing, designing, re-working, re-tooling, and working toward building a campus. He built the first fully on-line medical school in the Caribbean, but he never gave up on building a medical school campus. In the end, Dan accomplished great things, he touched the lives of countless students, many of whom are practicing physicians, and he made a good living in St. Lucia (I had the privilege of spending a week with Dan and his wife in St. Lucia in 2005) ... Dan's enemy was NEVER his lack of passion, his lack of patience, or his lack of persistence. Dan just simply ran out of time ... but he never gave up on his dream ... not even once.

Dan taught me a lot of life lessons ... and he really helped me understand better this place in which we live ... Butte, America. Dan absolutely loved Butte ... he loved the fabric that made Butte what it is. He loved telling Butte stories. And we would have long animated discussions about the unique character of this truly authentic place. And Dan once told me a wonderful story that really sums up Butte and I want to share it with you. As you know, Butte has always been a place known for its enormous generosity ... but Butte is also a place where if you get too high on your horse, someone is going to want to knock you off. So Dan told me this story that explains that element of Butte perfectly. He said ...

"Butte is a place where if a man is walking down the street wearing a suit and there is a hole in his pocket, someone is going to buy that man a new suit. But if that man is walking down the street in Butte wearing a new suit, someone is going to tear a hole in his pocket." Dan Harrington

Think about that

Over my career, I've done some really amazing things, and I have raised three amazing kids and now have two beautiful grandkids. And I've loved my career ... and I always look to my mentors like Dan Harrington and my old Boss Dr. John Hintz who helped shape me and guide me. Over my career, I've done some very diverse things. I have both of my degrees from Montana Tech – and I worked here on this campus for 17 years – I am a die hard Oredigger!!!!

I've worked as an Environment Engineer doing hazardous waste management, I've run the admissions, alumni relations, marketing, and PR offices, and was a major gift fundraiser here at Montana Tech. In 2002, I helped create the nation's first undergraduate degree in Health Care Informatics at Montana Tech ... and then I got the entrepreneurship bug ... and in 2003, along with my former business partner Pat Dudley, I formed my first company. In 2008, Pat and I

recognized a huge training gap that exists in rural healthcare for medical simulation training ... so we wrote a business plan ... and did an initial feasibility study. We became PASSIONATE about building a national rural healthcare simulation training center right here in Butte. Why Butte ... because we both love this community. But we needed more experience. We had to have PATIENCE. So we spent 10 years developing simulation training for the special operations forces of our US Military. And about 5-6 years ago, we decided to give building this center everything we've got. We came up with the name Praxis Center, we began building upon the partnerships and relations we had begun creating with the US Military, and we began trying to figure out how to finance a \$36 Million, 40,000 ft² facility. I won't take time to go into all the details of this amazing roller coaster ride, or how many times this project has died, or about losing my dear friend and business partner Pat to cancer three years ago, but I can tell you that we are now very close now to the finish line. We've raised most of the capital required to get this done, we own the land in uptown Butte where we will build the Praxis Center, and we've begun hiring our team this month. We are almost there, but I can tell you that this project would be nowhere if it were not for three critically important things

- Passion
- Patience
- Persistence

Here's my quick thoughts on each of those:

PASSION: Without passion, you may as well forget your **mission**. Passion separates winners from losers. If all else is equal, bet on the team or individual with the most passion. Having Passion will help bring joy to your successes and understanding to your failures.

PATIENCE: Patience enables you to stay the course even under the most difficult circumstances. There are no shortcuts to success. Be patient, stay focused and stay true to yourself.

PERSISTENCE: Be persistent in pursuit of your goals and dreams. I have found that the hard work of entrepreneurship can only be sustained by more hard work. Things always develop slower than you expect, things always take more capital than you think, and Murphy's Law which says that "whatever can go wrong will undoubtedly go wrong" —will always be present.

Remember the three P's! And, as you all take these next major steps in your life after high school, try to remember that you have already demonstrated GREAT CHARACTER by accomplishing Mariah's Challenge, you showed integrity and honesty, and you should be deeply and profoundly proud of this accomplishment. Find your Passions, Be Patient with yourself and other, and be persistent in achieving those things you set out to achieve. Embrace things that are difficult.

I taught a course called College Success at Montana Tech for about a dozen years. I always ended each semester with my top success strategies. Here they are:

- Stay Healthy
- Be resilient
- Stay balanced Don't confuse your career with your life
- Never stop learning
- Keep reading
- Show up. Do the Work!
- Don't be afraid to fail
- Have fun!

And my final thought for you tonight is this please take a page from the Book of Leo McCarthy *"Love Hard and Grow Old."*

God Bless you all and Congratulations on completing Mariah's Challenge!

Thank you!