

Oprah Winfrey's speech at Stanford Lesson 2:

(from 17:43 to 21:33)

Now I want to talk a little bit about failings, because nobody's journey is seamless or smooth. We all stumble. We all have setbacks. If things go wrong, you hit a dead end - as you will - it's just life's way of saying time to change course. So, ask every failure - this is what I do with every failure, every crisis, every difficult time - I say, what is this here to teach me? And as soon as you get the lesson, you get to move on. If you really get the lesson, you pass and you don't have to repeat the class. If you don't get the lesson, it shows up wearing another pair of pants - or skirt - to give you some remedial work.

And what I've found is that difficulties come when you don't pay attention to life's whisper, because life always whispers to you first. And if you ignore the whisper, sooner or later you'll get a scream. Whatever you resist persists. But, if you ask the right question - not why is this happening, but what is this here to teach me? - it puts you in the place and space to get the lesson you need.

My friend Eckhart Tolle, who's written this wonderful book called *A New Earth* that's all about letting the awareness of who you are stimulate everything that you do, he puts it like this: He says, don't react against a bad situation; merge with that situation instead. And the solution will arise from the challenge. Because surrendering yourself doesn't mean giving up; it means acting with responsibility.

Many of you know that, as President Hennessey said, I started this school in Africa. And I founded the school, where I'm trying to give South African girls a shot at a future like yours - Stanford. And I spent five years making sure that school would be as beautiful as the students. I wanted every girl to feel her worth reflected in her surroundings. So, I checked every blueprint, I picked every pillow. I was looking at the grout in between the bricks. I knew every thread count of the sheets. I chose every girl from the villages, from nine provinces. And yet, last fall, I was faced with a crisis I had never anticipated. I was told that one of the dorm matrons was suspected of sexual abuse.

That was, as you can imagine, devastating news. First, I cried - actually, I sobbed - for about half an hour. And then I said, let's get to it; that's all you get, is half an hour. You need to focus on the *now*, what you need to do *now*. So, I contacted a child trauma specialist. I put together a team of investigators. I made sure the girls had counseling and support. And Gayle and I got on a plane and flew to South Africa.

And the whole time I kept asking that question: What is this here to teach me? And, as difficult as that experience has been, I got a lot of lessons. I understand now the mistakes I made, because I had been paying attention to all of the wrong things. I'd built that school from the outside in, when what really mattered was the inside out.

So, it's a lesson that applies to all of our lives as a whole. What matters most is what's inside. What matters most is the sense of integrity, of quality and beauty. I got that lesson. And what I know is that the girls came away with something, too. They have emerged from this more resilient and knowing that their voices have power.