

Good morning everyone. First, let me congratulate you for the achievements that will be recognised, and second, pay respects to the memory of Josh Hartner and acknowledge the resilience you are showing in losing a friend and a colleague. And that is the theme I want to pick up today, but in a broader context – namely, the importance of resilience as you move through the next stages of your own journeys.

I stand in front of an Honours Board that previous Headmaster Henry Cooper introduced me to on my first day of School in February 1961 – I was not quite 12. He was able to tell stories from the board of so many who had succeeded in their lives through resilience, hard work and taking their opportunities, and when we look around the Sporting Honours Board as well, we see the same characteristics come through for those whose names you would recognise.

It is those three characteristics – resilience and self-insight, perseverance and effort, and taking opportunities as they present themselves, that will lead you to make the most out of your lives.

You face a world of unprecedented change and, in some ways, uncertainty. But don't be frightened of it, for change and uncertainty is inevitable and creates opportunities. You will see remarkable technology developments, undoubted changes in how society operates, in how the economy works, in facing environmental challenges and geostrategic uncertainties. But how do we cope with change? Whether it is in our personal lives, or in these much bigger externalities, we rely on our psychological mechanisms of putting things in perspective.

Our first romantic engagement as an adolescent will not be our last, my wife was my fifth or sixth relationship, so it is not a reason for seeking into deep depression. The most important part of resilience is having self-insight. Reflect on situations, understand that s#!\* happens and recognise that success in life comes through resilience to the knocks we all face.

I lost a brother in an accident, and I have had many setbacks where funding proposals I thought were a slam dunk did not come through, or when I did not get a job I thought I should have. But one moves on. Look at Matt Henry with the Blackcaps – that showed real resilience to not being picked for so many years.

Self-insight is critical – you have all different personalities, some of you have natural leadership skills, some will not. Some will be more extroverted, some more introverted, you all have talents to be developed. Be honest to yourself about what you can be and should be. You will be disappointed to aim to be an entrepreneur but do not have the skills to do that well – it requires particular attributes including an appetite for risk and the ability to live with disappointment.

The second most important thing in having resilience is having social support – from your mates, your family, your spouse, your mentor. I was talking to my mentor in San Francisco until he died at age 92 only five years ago. We are social animals and we thrive with social interactions.

Nobody really gets anywhere in life when looked at over the long term without perseverance. It is said it takes 10,000 hours to become a real expert in anything. That is five years at eight hours a day, five days a week. True success – whether in business, academic or in sport – takes time. Transient celebrities on the web may give you transient narcissistic satisfaction, but it is unlikely unless you are a Hollywood celebrity to give you lifelong success and satisfaction.

From the time I entered a full-time research career before I had any recognition was about eight years of hard graft. Success does not mean you make headline, most people who make a real contribution and gain life satisfaction do so in much more modest ways.

Ad don't plan your life out in an over defined way at this age. Things will change – and change fast – both as you complete adolescence and over the coming decades. Most of the jobs that exist now did not exist 30 years ago, and many of the companies that are now dominant did not exist then either. Be prepared to change course, perhaps because you really think you are on the wrong road – because happiness is the biggest determinant of life satisfaction over your next 70 years.

I started off at university studying Mathematics, but soon knew it was the wrong path and that the mysteries of Biology and Medicine – even though I had not taken Biology at Grammar – was my path. But then one has to recognise opportunities and make your own luck.

I was one year out of medical school and planning to be practicing as a paediatrician when one of my teachers asked me whether I wanted to join him and Sir Edmund Hillary, another Grammar Old Boy, on a medical research expedition to the Himalayas. An opportunity came out of the blue and suddenly I was sitting at 3,500m staring at magnificent mountains for the next three months, studying the impact of iodine deficiency on the Sherpa. I remember sitting there, staring and realising that my career was not in routine clinical service but in research – a choice I never regretted.

I was leading the Liggins Institute that I had founded and was already internationally renowned, when in 2009, the phone rang out of the blue and it was (then-Prime Minister) Sir John Key asking if I would be his Chief Science Advisor? Again, even though I thought I would see out my career in medical research, I entered a new world of policy, politics and diplomacy, again a choice I never regretted.

Grammar should have taught you the skills of perseverance, Grammar has given you friendship. You must build your own self-insights, you must feel confident to live with change and cope with the pluses and minuses ahead. Don't over plan your lives – be open to opportunity.

I may have been a nerd of the worst type when I was at Grammar, but the skills it has given me leave me with a great satisfaction 50 years later. Be brave, be confident, persevere, understand yourselves, and just be yourself. You will then have a life of great satisfaction.

I wish you all luck on your journey. Per Angusta Ad Augusta.