
The Cost Of One Life For The Quality Of Many

The hardest part of a person's life is finding out who they are. To find out who they are, they might go to college or drop out of college to travel or do something else with their life completely. Both 2005 Kenyon College graduates and every reader learned a lot about themselves after either reading or listening to David Wallace's speech "This Is Water". Wallace's speech contains raw and emotional insights that should be taken to heart, even more so after knowing Wallace committed suicide three years after his speech was given.

The beauty and uniqueness of Wallace's speech is the brutal honesty of it. "...The truth is that most of these suicides are actually dead long before they pull the trigger" (Wallace). Wallace talks about suicide and every day, boring adult situations to warn us that if we don't train our mind to work for us, then it's going to control us and we're going to end up unhappy. Wallace proceeds to say "...learning how to think really means learning how to exercise control over how and what you think." This further explains how Wallace's insights are pure and honest. His comments of suicide and his deeper explanations of his insights discredits his claim that he's not trying to "give moral advice" as he says throughout his entire speech. His diction indicates he really wanted the audience to take his insights on life to heart, perhaps so the audience doesn't end up with the same fate as himself.

Wallace entire speech gives advice that can be detrimental to a young person's future, but there is one that stuck out like a sore thumb. Wallace says, "You get to consciously decide what has meaning and what doesn't" (Wallace). He's trying to promote the idea of controlling your actions and feelings by teaching your mind to consciously decide what's important to you and what simply doesn't matter. This is important to the audience, especially at the age range it is targeted at. Most people when they're graduating college are hyper focused on relationships or work life or the drama in their life. As a balance of work and personal life are important, he's telling the audience that they get to decide what's important to them. For example, maybe the girl at your work that is constantly in a bad mood with you isn't worth your time and you should focus your energy elsewhere.

Since reading and listening to Wallace's speech, I've thought a lot about it as a whole. I thought a lot about how his insight, "You get to consciously decide what has meaning and what doesn't" (Wallace) applies to me and my life. I choose to deal with a lot of problems and people that aren't beneficial to my future or mental health. I thought a lot about choice after reading Wallace's speech. I started choosing to think differently about unnecessary problems and situations. My automatic reaction to someone hurting me is to forgive and forget and just never address it again. I still forgive people for hurting me, but I also started choosing my battles and choosing who I should focus my energy on.

Wallace's insights not only inspired the audience to live their lives better, but to live in spite of how his life ended. His speech was raw and brutally honest, had insights that can help anyone at any time in their life, and managed to impact people like me in their everyday way of thinking. David Foster Wallace was an honest man who didn't ever want anyone to suffer the same misery as he did. His insights on life may have saved a lot of people's lives, even though he sacrificed his own.

Work Cited

Wallace, David Foster. "This Is Water." Kenyon College, 2005, Gambier, OH. Commencement Address.