

Good day students, it is an honor to be here. My name is Obinna. I'm Nigerian, born and raised. I'm also a senior nursing major and the President of the SGA.

This summer, I worked at the University of Pittsburgh medical center on the neurovascular ICU floor and the psych ward. I saw a lot of pain, death, and suffering which hit too close to home because it reminded me of mine. You see, last year's November, I went through a severe episode of major depression. It was bad, I was in a dark place for a couple of reasons. Let's see. I was grieving about my mom who I lost to cancer eight years ago. My sister who was poisoned and killed before I barely got to know her. The fact that I no longer talk to and have a functional relationship with my abusive dad and toxic elder brother. I wanted to make the pain go away but I didn't want to hurt the people that loved me. So, I asked for help and fought for my life. I was also lucky to have love that anchored me, so to speak, in the form of a few special people. One of them is here today as my best friend, a girl that I love more than life itself, and the Vice President of the SGA.

I wanted to share a tiny bit of my pain today because I want to say to someone that you are not weak. Do not let yourself or anyone else make you feel as though they are mentally stronger and better equipped than you to cope with life's problems. 'Cause see, that is how they sleep better at night, that is how they feel better about themselves. So, if you're here, and you're mustering the strength to keep pushing through your dark times or even pull yourself out of a dark place. Pause, think about what you've been through, how far you've come and give yourself a resounding round of applause.

Here's my point. Part of the reason for life has to be about life itself. Our trauma can beat us down, take our moms, dads, siblings, leave us destitute, homeless, vulnerable but don't give your challenges the satisfaction of knowing that you lost in this game called life. Living out your best life is the sweetest revenge. So allow yourself to feel the different shades of life but don't lose sight of the fact that you deserve a good life, a fulfilled life, despite everything you've been through, because of everything you've been through. And notice, I didn't use the phrase, a happy life, so don't go through life chasing after a feeling because you won't feel happy all the time. Don't go mindlessly chasing after someone to make you feel a certain way either,

especially when they don't want you in their life. Instead, pursue the knowledge to always put yourself in the best position to make the best choices for your life. Try and acquire the mental assets and tools to break those negative patterns and cycles that you keep repeating, hindering you from getting to a good place in life. Not just getting there but staying there. Do not let your trauma define you anymore than it should.

And not just your trauma, don't let people bring you down on your journey. Don't let people manifest themselves onto you and tell you how to feel, when to feel. That you're dumb, ugly, stupid, can't do something. Don't talk about what you're gonna do, don't criticize people for what they not doing. Focus. Be about that life, put in that work. Build your own stage and make them see you. Work hard till the only way you know how to work is hard.

I'll end with this. Each of us has a story. I hope you & I, keep putting in the work to make your story a good one. One that ends well. One where you freed yourself from your demons, as much as you can anyways. Because when you don't really try, that's how children grow up to become the parents they despised. That's how adults grow through life sabotaging themselves and their happiness. That's how people reject the love they deserve even when it hits them in the face.

Thank you all and welcome back to Berea.