Brick, mortar and concrete

My dear fellow toastmasters, I would start by asking a question –

“Who among you is the second child in the family? Can you raise your hands?”

Psychologists believe that the second child in the family is often more competitive and exceeds expectations set by the elder sibling. They tend to be more successful as proportionately high number of them became inventors, artists, revolutionaries and politicians. In fact, psychologists have also given this phenomenon a name – the second child theory. But nature has exceptions and I am one of them.

My elder sister was first ranker almost all the time and she would feel gutted when she lost it to someone else. On the contrary, I was happy to get a 60% and move over to a new grade. But there were occasional sparks of brilliance in 4th, 10th, 12th grade. 10th and the 12th are board exams and in my school after 4th you move to an evening high school shift with totally new set of teachers. If you draw a graph of my percentage score to my grades then you will find it mimicking the seismometer measuring sporadic seismic activity. I call this highly super optimum performance as I only performed when it really mattered. And when things start working for you in a particular way, why change it. Hence this became part of my personality.

I had decent amount of success with this super optimum performance of mine. I was the finalist at the National Astronomy Olympiad. I was a finalist at city level quiz competitions. I even managed to get into one of the best colleges in the state.

I became more and more complacent. Rather than planning and thinking about my future I would leave up to destiny to set me on the correct path. Believe me things just happened for me such as Maharashtra government announcing to have an entrance exam for engineering for the first time after I left 4 marks from my chemistry paper in the board examination. 4 marks is all the difference between getting Computer Science seat in College of Engineering, Pune and Computer Science course in any other colleges. As luck would have it, I got another chance and rest as they say is history. I went along the way very similar to the European sailors who amassed all the riches in the world through the trade winds. I felt like Rajnikanth, who with his sheer presence could defeat any bad guy in the world.

But when everything was in cruise control my luck turned on me. After faring well in most of the mock CAT exams, on the D-day I panicked and totally messed up. I took this defeat personally as I never knew what a defeat was.

I really wanted to change myself and started analyzing what I did right to have achieved what I did. I found that every time I had exceeded expectations, I had a teacher or a mentor who kept me on my toes to give 100% every time. From Mrs. Aswani in my 4th standard to Dr. Sachin Lodha at TRDDC, I thank them all very much.

They all told me the same thing. It is very similar to a saying which goes like this - “If you live each day as if it is your last, one day you most certainly be right!”
Your time is limited in this world and you will get only limited opportunities. And the only way to maximize on each one of them is through - brick, mortar and concrete. Yes, brick, mortar and concrete. Brick stand for all the qualities or abilities an individual possesses such as to work hard, eagerness to learn etc. Mortar stands for the soft skills which binds all the abilities together. But a person must have humility and moral fiber that forms the concrete which is crucial for strong foundations that form character of a person.

So whatever happens, if you are lucky or not, don’t forget brick mortar and concrete. As time passes by the luck will turn your way. If you believe in brick, mortar and concrete the universe will conspire to help you achieve what you always wanted.

Now I am at the crossroads of my life. I am preparing for getting into a b-schools program and I hope you all become the teachers and mentors who keep me focused on not forgetting brick, mortar and concrete by providing feedback on not just this speech but also on other facets in me.

Henry Ford once said “Whether you think you can or you think you can’t, either way you are right”. Countless diamonds live and die undiscovered, uncut, unpolished. And I want all of you to make a promise to yourself that you will not be one of them.

Thank you all very much for listening to me. God bless good people.