

A Speech by Denzel Washington

I am both proud and nervous to stand before the graduating class from Penn State University today. Thank you for giving me this chance to give you some of my advice:

If I'm going to fall, I don't want to fall back on anything, except my faith. In fact, I want to fall *forward*. At least I figure that way, I'll see what I'm about to hit. So always try to fall forward in life. Here's what I mean:

Thomas Edison conducted 1000 failed experiments. Did you know that? I didn't either, because number 1001 was the light bulb. So, fall forward. Every failed experiment is one step closer to success.

Always remember that you will fail at some point in your life. Accept it. You will lose. You will make a fool of yourself. You will be bad at

something. There is no doubt about it. That's not the usual message for a graduation ceremony. But, I'm telling you, this is life, so accept it.

Here's my second point about failure: If you don't fail... you're not even trying. Remember, "To get something you never had, you have to do something you never did."

Here's my last point about failure: Sometimes it's the best way to figure out where you're going.

Your life will never be a straight path. So, take risks. Be open to life. To accept new views. Be open to new opinions. Be willing to speak at the graduation ceremony at one of the country's best universities... even though you're scared stiff.

While doing new things may be scary, they will also be rewarding. Because the chances you take...

the people you meet... the people you love...the faith
that you have—that's what's going to make your life.

And when you fall throughout life—remember to
always *fall forward*.

Thank you and good luck!