

## The Reason You're Here!

Shortly after birth (sometimes earlier), children begin to hear about the importance of pursuing an education. This handy bit of guidance is perhaps the only thing a child hears more than "No!" Unfortunately, no one bothers to talk about: WHY? What is the point of pursuing an education beyond high school and how does it figure into becoming a success?

Comedian Michael Dean Ester guides audiences through the pressures placed on today's college-bound generation. His goal is to help young adults arrive at the true meaning of success and demonstrate how a college education can help them define success in their individual lives. Using his own life as an example, Michael encourages students to discover their own particular skills and interests as the basis for a fulfilling career. (The Reason You're Here!) After all, those who are passionate about their work are the richest people indeed because they don't really work at all.

"When you discover your passion, you unleash a whole new motivation for pursuing an education. You finally understand why you started hearing about it the moment you were born. You learn the real reason you go to college: YOU."

*"College is more than a time for learning. It is a time for dreaming big. Of equal importance, it is a time to build foundations for those dreams. It is a time for defining and living up to the only set of expectations that truly matter: your own."*

This laughter-filled presentation is a must for students embarking on a college education. In an era where so much emphasis is placed on the need to plan for college, a staggering number of students forget to plan for what comes afterward. Throughout a decade of performing as a comedian at college campuses nationwide, Michael has spoken with literally thousands of students who profess no clue whatsoever what they're doing there. Put simply, this presentation is the clue that solves the puzzle. By placing the college experience in its proper context as a pathway to a rewarding career, Michael challenges his audience to engage their imaginations as well as their brains.

Basic Outline:

(Note: The presentation itself is punctuated by jokes from my act and amusing stories from my life. A thumbnail sketch of the “content” appears below. It’s the 20 minute version, as well as a first draft from the first booking, so obviously I’m going to flesh it out substantially as a stand-alone event.)

1. Greetings and thanks for the people who sponsored the event.
2. An explanation of my job, my career pursuit: stand up comedy
3. Introduction to tonight’s topic: Why the heck are we here, anyway?
4. Before the why’s, a note on how incredibly fortunate all of you are.
  - A. It’s okay to be nervous when embarking on something new.
  - B. Right now, at this moment, you’re the luckiest people on Earth.
    - \* Nobody, not the richest person, can go back and start over.
    - \* You’re AT THE BEGINNING right now, the blank slate.

(How many of you would trade places with Bill Gates, the richest man in America? SHOW OF HANDS. In an interview, Bill Gates was asked if he had any regrets. He said that the one thing he wished he could do was go back and finish college. He said it would have given him a better foundation for everything that happened to him afterward.)

- C. In reality, YOU can trade places with Bill Gates. (It won’t be easy.)
  - \* Be as innovative, work as hard, you can be on the Forbes 400
- D. But ... Bill Gates can’t trade places with you. (Nobody can go back.)
  - \* Appreciate the value of where you are. (Worth billions)
- E. Two types of regrets
  - \* Commission - things you did you wished you hadn’t
  - \* Omission - things you wished you had done that you didn’t
  - \* Live your life avoiding the SECOND kind.

5. Let’s make a list of reasons that AREN’T good reasons to go to college:

- A. “Just to make your parents happy”
  - \* Surprise: your parents don’t want you to go to
  - \* What they really want is for you to SUCCEED & be HAPPY.
  - \* Unless you do something you believe in, you won’t do either.
- B. “Just to make more money”
  - \* It’s true that college grads make more, but are they happier?
  - \* Some of the most miserable people I know have tons of money.
  - \* It’s how you spend your time, not your money, that defines you.
- C. “Just to PARTY!”
  - \* Never play a drinking game ...
  - \* Why kill all those brain cells you’re there to educate?
  - \* “Experimenting” with drugs? That experiment has been done.

6. So what are some GOOD reasons to go to college?

- A. To Get away from other people’s expectations and focus on yours
  - \* Find out who YOU really are
  - \* Blaze your own trail, your own course of study
- B. Indulge your intellect.
  - \*Indulge your natural sense of wonder and curiosity.
  - \*Enrich yourself by learning.
  - \*The more you learn, the more you know, the more interesting you become, the more distinct you are, the more you develop into the one true "YOU" that you are capable of being.

C. To make a plan for the rest of your life.

- \* What I find amazing as I talk to seniors in college...
- \* "What's the plan?" I don't know.
- \* You have to plan your work and work your plan.
- \* The best advice I ever got, the point that changed my life:
- \* My guidance counselor asked: What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail? I joked that I would make a living being funny.
- \* I said it in the 8-yr-old "I want to be an Astronaut" way
- \* He said ... so ... do it. : "Do your thing."
- \* My point is: Make a plan for your life & stick to it.
- \* I know you're thinking ... we can't all tell jokes for a living.  
Yes, but you can make your own plan to make a living doing your thing and be just as happy about it. (My father the coal miner...)

D. THE NUMBER ONE REASON: Discovering your PASSION, your thing.

- \* Caution: some of your classes will suck. They're supposed to.
- \* Others will be interesting to the point of seeming effortless.
- \* I challenge you to find your thing, live it, and you'll never work a day in your life because you'll be making a living doing something you would otherwise do for free. I offer myself as an example. I do my thing in some pretty cool places. On cruise ships ... I'm getting paid to be on a pleasure cruise. At schools, I get paid to hang out and make college students laugh. I love this job. Comedy is what gets me out of bed every single afternoon. I love my job. More I cannot wish you than a job you love doing, a career you enjoy. That's success. That's richness. That is, listen to me, the fruit of a college education.

7. The best part ... is that's it's right in front of you.

- A. I remind you that you are at the most enviable point in anyone's life.
  - \* The beginning. Blank slate. Billionaires would trade places with you if they could, but they can't, so make sure you make the most of this billion dollar opportunity.
- B. This stage of your life is worth a fortune.
  - \* In reality, it costs a small fortune, so treat it like an investment and spend each day wisely.

8. And finally, I want to leave you with the quote that hangs on the wall of my office. Loosely translated, it applies to your college education. Here it goes:

This is the beginning of a new phase of your life. You have been given this time to do with as you like. You can waste it, or you can use it for good. What you do with this time is important because you are trading four years of your young life for it, the last years of your youth. When that span of time is gone, it's gone forever. In its place will be something that you have left behind; that something is the foundation for the rest of your life. Let it be something good.