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Thank you, Mr. Hughes, for that introduction. Two years ago, I shared a story at graduation about the passing of my 99 year old grandmother. Known to my family as Grammie. Many in my family had hoped that she would have lived to be 100 years old. I have learned many life lessons as I reflect upon my encounters with Grammie. Not only lessons from her but also with my family members as we tried to figure out how to stay in touch with Grammie since we all moved across the state. In a conversation with my brother many years ago, he shared with me that he felt that the best thing to do would be to call grammie every Sunday just to stay in touch with her and see how she was doing. His suggestion struck a chord in me that made me think that this was indeed something that could easily be done. By taking a couple minutes out of the weekend to call Grammie regardless of my personal activities that day, just to spend 5, 10, 15 minutes with her discussing where she had been and what she had done that week. Over the first 5 years, the conversations always centered on her remembering me as a young boy or her remembering things that we had done as a family with her. We talked about the time that Grammie went with us to the Outer Banks. When climbing up the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse Grammie got dizzy half way up and I escorted her back to the bottom. The next 5 years, our conversations centered on how her day was going, what she had to eat, did she have her typical ice cream or her cup of coffee that day that she enjoyed so much. In the final years of her life, the conversations would center on more simple topics such as what did she eat for lunch, who stopped by to visit, and yes at times we would also talk about the weather. Many times I would simply ask her how she was doing. She would simply state, "Happy, Happy, Happy". That always told me that she was functioning at a level that made me feel comfortable because she had made that statement many times to me as a young boy. I knew by that statement she knew it was me was calling to say hello and that she was in my thoughts.

As the years progressed, I would as often ask my brother if he was also making a Sunday phone call and having conversations with Grammie. He stated his schedule was too busy with work and family to carve time out to make a phone call. When Grammie passed, it made me feel very good that I had those phone calls with her throughout the final years of her life. The phone calls became a routine in the Clark household that on Sundays, my own children would remind me "Dad, don't forget to call Grammie".

When I was at the funeral and talked to my brother, he had never engaged in making phone calls to Grammie. I never really told my brother how many times I had called and how helpful that was for me knowing, even though I was so far away, that Grammie was doing so well. My brother did not have that opportunity because he did not follow through. I know I gained a great respect for Grammie by following through on a great idea. I wonder what I would have lost if I had not followed through?

So my message to you today is if somebody gives you a good idea, don't just think about the idea, follow through with that idea, because what you may find out is that idea may benefit you and benefit others as well. As you graduate this evening think of someone you want to stay in touch with as you move onto the next chapter of your life. For you it may be your parents, grandparents, family members, friends, or a caring teacher.

Like my brother's idea benefited my grandmother by letting her know that I cared by staying in touch, it benefited me as well in the grieving process knowing that I had made the effort to stay in touch. So always remember, good ideas may come at you very rarely in life. Seize them, grab them, and act on them.