I’m going to tell you about a time when I was up against the odds with another human life in my hands, and I failed. I had many internal debates over the past few weeks because I wasn’t sure if I should share such a deeply personal and intimate tale. But I thought to myself, what is the point of sadness, of failure and even regret if we cannot learn from it? Why have such monumental experiences if we’re only going to box them up and store them in the depths of our minds?

My boyfriend, Chris, and I took a walk last spring through one of New Havens most beautiful neighborhoods. We came out of a stone walled park and heard what sounded like a muffled scream. I looked at Chris and he was as confused as I was. We took a left out of the park and began walking down an oak tree lined street. We approached a house with two young boys in the front yard. They were about 9 and 12. The younger one seemed a little distressed. As we walked by, I stopped and asked, “Boys, are you guys ok?” “We’re fine!” said the older one. Chris and I continued on but I began to have “that” feeling. You all know which one that is, right? The feeling that sits on your shoulders and whispers in your ear, “You’re not done here quite yet.” I turned around and went back to the boys. “Guys, seriously, is something going on, do you need help?” The younger boy leaped off of the front stoop and said, “Our dad fell, my mom is inside on the phone with 911 and we’re waiting for the ambulence.”

My instincts kicked in immediately. “Ok, well I know medicine, can I come in and see if I can help him?” The boy grabbed my hand, pulled me through the immaculate entry way and towards a stairwell that lead to the basement. He screamed down, “Mom! Someone is here!” I began going down what felt like the longest stairwell ever. I came to the bottom and saw a woman on the phone, frantically pacing over a body on the floor. “Hi, I’m so sorry, I’m a Physician Assistant. I was walking by and heard screams, what can I

do?” “My husband was running on the treadmill and just collapsed, my boys called me, I was at work, please…do something!” “What’s his name?” I asked. “Vikram,” she replied. I went over to the man and my stomach dropped. He was on his back and his head was at the end of the treadmill. There was a large cut above on his right forehead and his eyes were fixed. I bent down to feel his pulse. If anything, there was something faint. My time during my trauma surgery rotation kicked in and I immediately began chest compressions. “Vikram!” I shouted. “Vikram, blink your eyes if you can hear me!!” No movement. I continued compressions and asked his wife to give him his breaths. I continued to compressions as hard as I could. I’m still not sure where all of my strength was coming from because at the time, I felt numbness.

Right before the paramedics actually arrived I heard a long exhale from this man, what would be his last breath. With his wife in the background pleading for him to wake up, one of the paramedics came over and took over as my fatigue settled in. I gave what little history I knew to the paramedic and asked them to start a line and push epinephrine and set up the paddles to try and jolt him with electricity in a last ditch effort to restart his heart. As they boarded him up to transfer him to the hospital, I made my way out of the house and past the boys who were being consoled by a neighbor. I wouldn’t see them again until the wake.

That is my perception of failure. I couldn’t do it. I couldn’t bring him back. I replayed the moment over and over in my head for weeks after that. Was I over his sternum? Did I have his wife blow enough breaths into his mouth? Did I look stupid? How dare I think such selfish thoughts?

After a few weeks my thoughts of failure began to turn and evolve into a period of insight. What if, I thought. What if I allowed the man seconds more to hear his wife's voice? What if I gave those two little boys an extra 15 minutes of hope? It would be cruel to think that those moments don't matter to an individual. I've finally found peace in that what my perception of failure is, may be moments of hope to others. I cannot put a price tag on those moments, that's not my job. My job is to at least put forth a whole-hearted effort to provide extra moments to others.

So I tell you all this, you'll have a moment when you doubt yourselves, your choices and your own potential. Remember that those individual decisions will lead up to a moment when it matters. When everything you've worked so very hard for will collectively combust and present itself to you. Like me, it may be what you consider failure. But I ask you to analyze, learn and grow from that experience. Take something so very sad and own it. Own the emotions surrounding it, own its effect on others.

I look back to the moment when I had to re-introduce myself to Vikram's wife at his wake. It warmed my heart to see so many people in the funeral home, I could imagine that she was so very overwhelmed. I said to her, "Hi, I'm Jayme, I was with you at your house with Vikram, I'm so sorry I couldn't save him." My own tears barely hit the floor before she took me in her arms and simply said, "you helped me, my boys and Vikram more than you know."

This, was one of my "A-ha!" moments. Through my doubt and insecurities over my experience with Vikram, I emerged knowing that I made the right decision some 8 years ago to become a Biology major here at Bay Path College. It wasn't something I expected coming from a musical background. I realized that every decision I've made in my life,

from accepting admission into Bay Path, to declaring Biology as my major, to going with gut instinct that I should practice medicine in my life, it all lead me to that oak tree lined street that one fateful day.

As members of the Bay Path community, you all have taken a pledge of honor, commitment, honesty, integrity and respect. You'll find throughout your life that your definition of those characteristics will constantly be developed and challenged, even by yourself. I beg you to stick to your convictions but all for discourse. Speak your mind but listen closely and above all love each other and strangers with all of your heart. Those will be the times that will affirm your decisions and will provide you with your "A-ha!" moments. I have my time here at Bay Path to thank for the same lessons you're being given during your time here. You're all given a very special opportunity here to be a part of a community that only wants to see you grow. That's our job here. To propel you on to greatness.

Your actions affect people. Your words, your movements and your accountability affect others. Your struggles, your failures, your lessons will be what writes the chapters of the journeys you will take throughout your career and your life. Own it. Understand that your path will take you to tremendous leaps and bounds but it will only matter if you grow, love and learn from your experiences.

I'll tell you what I tell many of my patients: I don't know how your life will play out. I don't know what will happen in your life. I don't know the whys, the whens or the wheres but I do know at least one thing. It WILL work out. It may not be how you planned or how you expected but know that it always works out in the end.

What speech wouldn't be complete without a quote?! "Rainer Rilke, a brilliant poet far beyond his time once wrote, "The deepest experience of the creator is feminine, for it is experience of receiving and bearing." I ask you all to receive your experiences, bare their lessons and on top of that all, pay it forward in the form of altruism and acceptance of yourself and each other. As we move on, my task for you is to think of a time when your failure wasn't really a failure. When success rose out of a painful experience. As you move towards graduation, whether it be in 8 months or in 3 years, keep telling yourself that you are setting up for greatness. That your decisions will always work out and that they just may surprise you.