

Good afternoon, Dr. Lussier, Dr. Chisum, the school committee, vice principals, students, teachers, and all those here in support of the Class of 2026. I also want to give a little extra shoutout to my parents because, obviously, without their sacrifices, I wouldn't be here today.

A few weeks ago, I found myself rewatching Ted Lasso for what's gotta be the third or fourth time. For those of you who don't know, Ted Lasso is a show about an overly enthusiastic Football coach who goes to England to coach a soccer team. He walks into a country where 99% of people think he's a joke, and instead of shrinking or playing it cool, he's just himself. He's loud, he's upbeat, he's absurdly optimistic, even given that Richmond (his team) kind of stinks in his first few seasons.

At some point while watching, I realized something simple. The whole reason the show works is because Ted is the least nonchalant person alive. He says hello first. He remembers your name. He means it when he asks how you're doing. In a world where, somehow, it's been deemed cool to be nonchalant and not care about anything or anyone, Ted didn't get the memo, and everyone around him is better for it. While it might be a stretch to say Richmond improved purely because of this outgoingness, their sense of community isn't a coincidence. It's a byproduct of Ted's leadership style.

That got me thinking about what we actually want to talk about today. Something that really matters. Something that's plagued our generation and quietly ruined more relationships than we'd like to admit. Something I've been thinking about more and more as high school ends and real life gets closer. The stupidity of being nonchalant.

Nonchalant is being detached, unbothered, too cool to text first, wave eagerly in the hallways, or compliment someone without sounding sarcastic. Somehow, our generation has collectively decided the best way to be considered popular is to not care about the world around you. To not care when your friend hits the game-winning shot, your brother gets the job they wanted, or when your parents come to support you at your performance. Personally, I think this is one of the dumbest things we've ever agreed on.

Because here's what really gets me about the word. It literally means "not chalant." Except chalant isn't actually a word. Go home and look it up. It's not in the dictionary. The English language just handed us the negative version and forgot to include the original. Which means for our entire lives, we've had a word for not caring, and no word at all for the opposite.

So, I've decided to embrace it as one anyway. Being chalant means you actually care. You show up when it counts. You say what you were thinking instead of deciding it's weird. You cheer too loudly, wave back with genuine enthusiasm, and call just because you wanted to check in. Deep down, everyone cares — being chalant just means you're not pretending otherwise.

Yeah, maybe it's embarrassing. Maybe it sucks the energy out of you. Maybe it's too hard to pull off. But here's what I think: being chalant is not some personality trait that some of us magically have, and some of us don't. It's just being authentically yourself, without performing as some cooler, more detached version of you on top of it.

Think about who you are with the people you're most comfortable with. I'd be willing to bet that version laughs the hardest, gets excited without apologizing for it, and says what they actually mean. That's the real you. The chalant you. The version of yourself you should aspire to be every second of every day. What the world needs is people who are unconditionally themselves, in every room, not just the comfortable ones.

One of my versions of chalant is compliments. I genuinely love giving them — because I think people don't praise enough anymore. We walk around all day noticing things about each other and keeping it entirely to ourselves, like it would be weird to just say it out loud. It's not weird. It's the opposite of weird. I know you've had that moment when you received a compliment and your day got slightly better. It's something simple, yet the reward is immeasurable. Telling someone you like their shoes, or their shirt, or their hair takes two seconds, and in that moment, you will make their day a little brighter.

And, I know for a lot of people it's not that easy, and I understand. But then again, it doesn't have to be a compliment. For some people, being chalant looks like a wave. For others, it's just a nod across the room — that small, silent acknowledgment of their existence that puts a smile on anyone's face. That's it. That's the whole gesture. And it means so much more than people realize, especially to someone who's having a day where they feel invisible. The size of the action is almost irrelevant. What matters is that you did something instead of nothing.

In a few months, most of us will walk into rooms where nobody knows us. We'll be at new places, with new instructors, with new peers who are equally terrified and pretending to be someone they aren't. Nobody there will know your history, your reputation, what sports teams you like, or what you accomplished here.

What everyone will figure out almost immediately is the kind of person you are. Whether you make the room warmer or colder when you walk in. Whether you're the same person everywhere you go. You can't fake it for that long.

I can guarantee that sometime in the last four years, somebody simply said hello, waved to you, and made you feel like you belonged, so go do that for someone else. Pay it forward. Make friendliness the new trend. That's the only thing I'm asking of you today. Not to be the most successful person in the room. Not to have it all figured out. Just to be the kind of person who makes the next room a little warmer when you step in.

Congratulations, Class of 2026. Go be chalant.