

Greetings class of 2028!

I am Lou Kozloff, a proud member of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine class of 1969, and I am here to welcome you to what I (clearly impartially) feel is the finest medical school on the planet.

First of all, please accept my apologies for not being there in person, but mitigating circumstances have conspired to prevent that. Nevertheless, I am certainly there in spirit, and in that capacity am thrilled and honored to present to all of you – as a gift from several generous members of my class – what is for most of you your first stethoscopes.

The stethoscope has historically been a symbol of the medical profession, and I am happy to be a part of this presentation. But I want you to appreciate some more subtle significance of these constructions of rubber, plastic and metal, so please humor me and accept what we students used to call “pearls of wisdom” from a more senior member of the profession you have chosen.

Use these stethoscopes to LISTEN. Listen to hearts for their rhythms, for murmurs, for any aberrations in their sounds. Listen to lungs for evidence of fluid, spasm, or infection. Listen to abdomens for evidence of normal or abnormal gastrointestinal function. Listen to blood vessels for sounds of worrisome pathology. Think of your new stethoscopes as reminders to LISTEN! Hopefully in a short time you will learn how to actually attach them to your ears.

LISTEN! That is the most important symbolic nature of these stethoscopes. Remember this – nearly every patient you will see during your training and during your careers will have one thing in common. At some level they will be scared. In my long tenure as a clinical physician, I do not remember any patient making an appointment to see me just to tell me that he or she feels great and has nothing wrong with them. So all your patients will be scared of something – that is why they have come to see you. Remember your stethoscopes and LISTEN – to the patient.

By listening, you will be able to allay some fears, restore some confidence, and – most importantly – make that patient feel better. That is our primary purpose as physicians – to make people feel better. Listen! And reassure your patients that all the knowledge and compassion available to you as a member of your chosen profession will be available to them to make them at least a little less scared than before they saw you. If you can do that, you will live a happy life, secure in the knowledge that somewhere along the way you have made people feel better.

So welcome, Class of 2028 – accept these stethoscopes and never forget what they should remind you to do – LISTEN!

I am proud of all of you and can't wait to see what you do.

Thank you.