

Francis Su is a math professor at Harvey Mudd (a college in California), recipient of the Mathematical Association of America's (MAA) Haimo Teaching Award and former president of the MAA. He gave a talk that I think is important to read or listen to.

Text: <http://mathyawp.blogspot.com/2013/01/the-lesson-of-grace-in-teaching.html> (Links to an external site.)

Audio (~30

minutes): <https://www.dropbox.com/s/2gle01p7lz1jmjw/Haimo%20Lecture%20-%20The%20Lesson%20of%20Grace%20in%20Teaching.mp3> (Links to an external site.)

The assignment is to respond to the prompt below, then respond to the comments from at least two of your classmates. When you respond to your classmates, try to connect to their experiences with your own experiences. As always, you are allowed to disagree with their perspective, but you must always be respectful in how you communicate.

- Select a portion of the talk that resonated with you. It could be something that reinforces a belief you already hold, or it can be a new insight of perspective that you gained from thinking about Su's ideas. If possible, connect it to your academic experiences, either past or present.

Alternative prompts:

- A recurring theme of Su's talk is "Your accomplishments are NOT what make you a worthy human being." The idea of being a "worthy human being" is related to your sense of self, and one aspect of your sense of self is your "mathematical identity." A common accomplishment-based mathematical identity sounds like this: "I normally don't do well in my math classes, which means I'm just not a math person." With that in mind, write a short paragraph explaining what you think a non- accomplishment-based mathematical identity might look like, and whether that is something you would like to embody.
- Consider the following statement: "I like to tell them the struggle is the more interesting place to be: because a healthy confusion is where the real learning begins. Just like in life, the most meaningful lessons are learned when our afflictions and struggles are greatest." Do you agree with this? Why or why not? Share an example from your academic experiences to support or elaborate on your perspective.