

Jim Valvano's ESPY Awards Speech (Excerpt)

3:35 min.

On March 4, 1993, Jim Valvano was awarded the inaugural Arthur Ashe Courage and Humanitarian Award at the first annual ESPY Awards.

Thank you, Thank you very much. ...I can't tell you what an honor it is, to even be mentioned in the same breath with Arthur Ashe. This is something I certainly will treasure forever. But, as it was said on the tape.... I'm going to speak longer than anybody else has spoken tonight. That's the way it goes. Time is very precious to me. I don't know how much I have left and I have some things that I would like to say. Hopefully, at the end, I will have said something that will be important to other people too.

When people say to me how do you get through life or each day, it's the same thing. To me, there are three things we all should do every day. We should do this every day of our lives. Number one is *laugh*. You should laugh every day. Number two is *think*. You should spend some time in thought. Number three is, you should *have your emotions moved to tears*, could be happiness or joy. But think about it. If you laugh, you think, and you cry, that's a full day. That's a heck of a day. You do that seven days a week, you're going to have something special.

I always have to think about what's important in life to me are these three things. Where you started, where you are and where you're going to be. When I think of where I started, I have to remember the first speech I ever gave. I was coaching at Rutgers University, that was my first job, and I was the freshman coach. That's when freshmen played on freshman teams, and I was so fired up about my first job....The very first time I stood in the locker room to give a pep talk. That's a special place, the locker room, for a coach to give a talk. So my idol as a coach was Vince Lombardi... Lombardi talked about the first time he spoke before his Green Bay Packers team in the locker room, and they were perennial losers. He wanted it to be emotional, so it would be brief. So here's what he did. Normally you get in the locker room, I don't know, twenty-five minutes, a half hour before the team takes the field, you do your little x and o's, and then you give the great Knute Rockne talk. You get your squad ready....Lombardi, what

he said was he didn't go in, he waited. His team wondering, where is he? Where is this great coach? He's not there. Ten minutes he's still not there. Three minutes before they could take the field Lombardi comes in, bangs the door open, and He walked in and he walked back and forth, like this, just walked, staring at the players. He said, "All eyes on me." and he said "Gentlemen, we will be successful this year, if you can focus on three things, and three things only. Your family, your religion and the Green Bay Packers." They knocked the walls down and the rest was history. I said, that's beautiful. I'm going to do that. Your family, your religion and Rutgers basketball.... I'm practicing outside of the locker room ... Not yet, not yet, family, religion, Rutgers Basketball. All eyes on me. I got it, I got it. Then finally, three minutes...I go to knock the doors open just like Lombardi. Boom! They don't open. I almost broke my arm. Now I was down, the players were looking. Help the coach out, help him out. Now I did like Lombardi, I walked back and forth, and I was going like that with my arm getting the feeling back in it. Finally I said, "Gentlemen, all eyes on me." These kids wanted to play, they're nineteen. "Let's go," I said. "Gentlemen, we'll be successful this year if you can focus on three things, and three things only. Your family, your religion and the Green Bay Packers," I told them.. I remember that. I remember where I came from.

It's so important to know where you are. I know where I am right now. How do you go from where you are to where you want to be? I think you have to have an enthusiasm for life. You have to have a dream, a goal. You have to be willing to work for it.

I just got one last thing, I urge all of you, all of you, to enjoy your life, the precious moments you have. To spend each day with some laughter and some thought, to get your emotions going. To be enthusiastic every day and as Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Nothing great could be accomplished without enthusiasm," to keep your dreams alive in spite of problems whatever you have. The ability to be able to work hard for your dreams to come true, to become a reality.

Now I look at where I am now and I know what I want to do.... We need money for research. It may not save my life. It may save my children's lives. It may save someone you love. ...-we are starting the Jimmy V Foundation for Cancer Research. And its motto is "Don't give up, don't ever give up." I'm going to work as hard as I can for cancer research and hopefully, maybe, we'll have some cures and some breakthroughs.

I'd like to think, I'm going to fight my brains out to be back here again next year for the Arthur Ashe recipient. I want to give it next year!

I know, I gotta go, I gotta go, and I got one last thing and I said it before, and I want to say it again. Cancer can take away all my physical abilities. It cannot touch my mind, it cannot touch my heart and it cannot touch my soul. And those three things are going to carry on forever.

I thank you and God bless you all.