

o-ver-ture

noun.

1. An instrumental composition intended especially as an introduction to an extended work, such as an opera.
2. An offering.

I've created the following piece for you on the occasion of your 16th birthday. I've called it an overture for a couple reasons. One, just as a musical overture at the beginning of a performance gives us a small taste of the musical we are about to hear, this "overture" was designed to give you a small taste of what I believe you will encounter both now and later in life. Secondly, as the definition above states, I present this to you as an offering, from mother to son; it's what I've accumulated in my head and heart, and what I wanted to give to you today. I hope you enjoy it.

P.S. Much of what I've shared, you already know.

An Overture for My Son in 16 short movements

1. Be the sort of person who acknowledges the victories, achievements and good news of others.

2. Try not to judge people; remember, everyone's struggling in some way and more often than not, trying their best. It's not like any of us have all the answers anyway.

3. There is a phrase when traveling abroad called "intention upon landing." (It's something Customs might ask as you enter their country, as in, what is the purpose of your visit.) I think this phrase applies to life in general, to almost any situation: I've just taken my seat here in class; what is my intention? I've just arrived at the home of a friend or a grandparent; what is my intention? I've just turned 16; what is my intention this year? Remember, you steer the course of your life, moment by moment, conscious choice by conscious choice, intention by intention.

4. Re-watch these movies throughout your life:

-*Shawshank Redemption*

-*Razor's Edge*

-*Harold and Maude*

They will mean something new to you each time. Plus, they're awesome.

5. It's kind of annoying that this is the way it is, but bottom line: working hard is so much more rewarding than not working hard. Blowing something off, slacking off, not working as hard as you could-- it feels good for about a second, but then haunts you indefinitely. It's the exact opposite with working hard: it sucks for about a second, but then feels great--and pays off-- indefinitely.

6. Do what you say you'll do. The world is overflowing with lame-o's who drop the ball, don't follow through, and then make excuses.

7. *Maya Angelou said, “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” It’s so true.*

8. *Don’t worry about making mistakes. You should only be worried if you are not learning from them, or owning them.*

9. *In any community (be it in a family, a school, an office, a country) there are two extremes: those who are an asset to the group, and those who are hindering asses. (And then there are lots of people in between who are just sort of neutral.) By being an asset, you make other lives better, and in turn you make the world better.*

10. *Laugh laugh laugh as much as possible. (Just not at others.)*

11. *Clean nails and good shoes make a huge difference. It’s hard to come across as “polished” without them.*

12. *This quote gets at something really important: “A thankful person is thankful under all circumstances. A complaining person complains even when he lives in paradise.” Negative, critical folks are exhausting, not to mention a major buzz kill.*

13. *Surround yourself with people who make you feel good; be wary of those who don’t.*

14. *I’ll tell you what: a girl loves a guy who can cook. And who knows how to listen. And knows how to apologize. And who can make them giggle. If you can do all that--oh, and possibly be a lead singer in a band--you’re golden. Just saying.*

15. *As you maneuver through life, here’s what I hope you’ll always hold onto:*

BE CURIOUS! (learn and stay open to the world’s wonders)

BE COURTEOUS! (manners matter)

BE HONEST! (integrity is the key to a good life)

BE COMPASSIONATE! (it’s what makes humans human)

BE KIND! (be kind, be kind, be kind)

16. *Have the time of your life!*

Love, Mom