# Why Everyone Should Have a Bucket List | Tanisha Singh | TEDxIrvingtonHighSchool – Transcript

Hi everyone, my name is Tanisha Singh, and before I begin my talk on why everyone needs a bucket list, I'd like to take you through a few pictures. You're all probably wondering why exactly those pictures showed up. I promise you, by the end of this talk, you'll have a better idea of why those pictures are relevant and also why you should have a bucket list. Next slide, please.

What exactly is a bucket list? Well, a bucket list is a list of things that you hope to accomplish or achieve in your lifetime. The main motivation for having a bucket list usually has to do with things that you want to do before you die. The thing with death is that we never know when it's coming. Many people like to think of death as every step closer we have every day that we live. We're getting one step closer to death. But as an optimist, I like to think of it as every single day that you're alive, you're getting one step closer to fulfilling your bucket list. Next slide, please.

One thing that I want to look towards, which is very closely related to bucket lists, is goal setting. One thing that you guys might be familiar with is New Year's resolutions. So with a raise of hands, how many of you have ever done a New Year's resolution? Quite many of you. Basically, when it comes down to New Year's resolutions, you fall into two categories. One category consists of people who make New Year's resolutions but do not actually follow through with them. Another group of people are those that actually strive to work towards them. Next slide, please.

The University of Scranton in Pennsylvania conducted a study on New Year's resolutions with Americans across the country. They found out that 45% of people regularly make New Year's resolutions, but of them, only 8% actually follow through with them. 47% of the resolutions that are made are somewhat educational-based or self-improvement-based, which is very closely linked to many of us students at Irvington who want to strive to have resolutions like getting into a good college or becoming a better person for oneself. Relating to that, next slide, we come to this realization: why are we making these resolutions if we're only going to not actually follow through? Why keep making the same mistakes again and again? After all, after you make one mistake, aren't you supposed to learn from it?

Well, that's the misconception. See, by writing a bucket list, you're taking the courage to write down what you want to do versus what you need to do in life. Society has made this image for us in which we have to do things that people want us to do, and regardless of what there is in your mind, you can't be the same image that you want to be unless you go for it. So we look at this idea of a bucket list and make a goal for ourselves because needing something is quite different than what we want. The phrases are completely different. Needs include things like having air, water, shelter—all these things are things you need to live—whereas your wants are things you desire that means once you attain them, you become a happier person. Next slide, please.

So, by differentiating our wants and needs, we're able to become happier people, and having a bucket list allows for you to actually think for yourself, think about what your wants are, and then put them on paper and make them tangible. Next slide, please.

Reason number one as to why you should have a bucket list: getting your goals on paper. Have you ever had a moment where someone's insulted you, or you've been told something that is very negative, and it sticks in your mind? There seems to be a special place in your brain where it just stays. Or have you ever experienced a traumatic experience and you just don't know what to do about it? There seems to be a replay button and you just can't pause it. It's due to your brain's "negative bias." See, what happens is that John Cacioppo, a Ph.D. from Ohio State University and now at the University of Chicago, did a study where he had a group of people look through pictures. Some of these pictures were of positive feelings, such as a Ferrari or a pizza; some of them included negative feelings like that of a mutilated cat or a dead face or, immediately, the face of a dead cat; and some had neutral feelings like a plate or a hairdryer. With all these images put together, he found out by recording the electrical activity in the brain's cerebral cortex that there seems to be a greater surge of electrical activity when these people were faced with negative pictures that had negative stimuli towards them. So clearly, we could see that because of this greater surge in activity, the attitudes of these people were more heavily influenced by the downbeat views than the good news. And it makes sense because humans, as many other organisms, have come up with this idea where we want to stay out of harm's way and therefore seem to understand more about the negative things in life than we do the positive. Next slide, please.

And so, with that, I'd like to lead onto my second reason, which is that of inspiration. By writing down your bucket list, you're able to inspire yourself to do things that you may not have thought to have done before. Many people's bucket lists have some absurd ideas that seem that they'll never ever happen, but because you have the courage to write down exactly what you want to on a piece of paper, you're able to think about other things and be inspired to do much more in your life. So what Thomas Edison said, that basically genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration, well, the bucket list counters this because here you are having the courage to write down your wants, differentiate them from your needs, and go through the process of actually thinking about who you are and what you want to do with your life. I mean, for instance, sometimes I'll just open up Photo Booth on my laptop and start talking to myself. And I don't do that because, oh, why not? But I do it because sometimes it's important for you to talk to yourself. Your bucket list is another way for you to do this, and it's only helpful to you in understanding who you are.

Which leads me to my third and final reason: self-accomplishment. Fulfilling your bucket list is more than just crossing out boxes. As today's talk subject is, the bigger picture—you're not just creating a list so you can check off boxes and complete what you want to; it's much more than that. It's about you learning about yourself. I'm pretty sure a lot of you have had to do the "All About Me" project in school, whether it be in elementary or high school, and it's one reason for your teacher to learn about you but in another way, it's also for you to learn more about yourself. And so, with that, next slide, please.

Next slide. I'd like to come back to the pictures that I showed at the beginning: the first one, hang gliding across the Grand Canyon; next, scuba diving in the Great Barrier Reef; next one, running a marathon; next one, making a full-course Indian meal for my family back in India; next one, graduating from college; and next one, doing a TED Talk. These are just a few of the things on my bucket list, and I assure you, with all of these, not only by making these bucket lists have I been more inspired, more self-accomplished, and got my goals onto paper and been able to do it, but I've also had fun with it.

So, with this TED Talk, I hope that you leave knowing that you can do that too and you can be inspired to do many things that not alone Society wants you to do but that you want to do. So, I hope that you leave this, even if you don't have a pen and paper, and go home and write yourself a bucket list and have fun with it. Thank you.