I’ve never been one to get star struck when I see a celebrity. Because of my career in the theatre, I grew up respecting and recognizing that a celebrities’ fame is a byproduct of their path to fulfill their purpose in life. However, when Meryl Streep taught a master class for Theatre Majors at Indiana University (where I go to school and study theatre) last week, all hopes of “playing it cool” and “just chillin with Meryl” quickly fletted. Upon her first step into the black box space, my body pulsated with excitement, honor, and awe. The most iconic actress of my lifetime a few feet away from me. But, far beyond her talents as an actress, I soon came to learn that Meryl (is it cool if I call her Meryl?) embodies those precious and rare traits that every human being strives to attain. She’s a superhuman. And let me tell you why...

1. Meryl’s modesty, down-to-earthness, and humbleness are not a façade.

And that was apparent immediately. Meryl never believed she was pretty enough to find success as an actress. She thought her glasses would never be cool enough, and her nose never small enough. Well guess what, Meryl? You were so wrong. However, Meryl’s tinge of self-doubt never completely vanishes, and constantly reminds her that perfection and ideal beauty do not (and will never) exist.

2. Meryl believes our days are empty unless we fill them. We must start by starting.

Sometimes, I find myself moping around, indulging in my self-pity and rotten mood. But, Meryl reminds us that we must empower ourselves to transform mundane into a masterpiece. If you don’t paint your empty canvas, no one is going do it for you. Because guess what? People are either too distracted celebrating their own pity parties or too busy creating their own destinies to care about yours.
3. Meryl does not believe she is *that* good. She genuinely does not understand how she became Meryl Streep.

Meryl slept through her law exam...and then decided to pursue acting. Acting satiated all of her curiosities and passions. “It is a privilege to be another person...YOU [the actor] are the voice of the dead, and it’s a responsibility to be truthful to everybody,” she said (in a totally nonchalant, effortless word-vomit demeanor).

4. She genuinely feels bad that she has all of this success.

Meryl knows other actors could play the roles she plays with conviction. And, as much as she wants to share the wealth, we all want to see Meryl. I’m sure buried deep in her subconscious, however, lays some drop of egotistical pride for her roles and her craft. It has to be there. She’s Meryl Streep.

5. She longs for a private life.

When asked, “reflecting back on your journey, what advice would you give to your 20 year-old self?” Meryl replied, “I wish I contemplated the cost of a public life.”

I doubt that she would have given up her wildly successful career to live in a quaint ranch as an accountant, but “normal” people often forget the luxuries of a private life we take for granted. Meryl can’t even walk her dog or go to the grocery without a paparazzi attack. People may fantasize about the illusion of fame and celebrities, but fame comes with a cost. And having my Starbucks barista know my daily order is enough fame for me.

*Direct quotes from Meryl:*

6. “Our habits and quirks make us unique. Embrace them. The light shines through those precious cracks.”

Perfection. I guess Ke$ha would say something like, “we are who we are”. But seriously... if we don’t embrace the imperfect, unique beauty we were born with, then no one else will embrace it either. So let your light shine bright. Sometimes the world needs a little more sunshine.

7. “Belief, commitment, and imagination are essential to making a person feel something.”

BOOM. I wish creative freedom and banishing all insecurities was that easy. But, with practice, patience, and passion, you too can make your mark. Make people feel feelings. That is art, and that is beautiful.
8. “Listen hard to the person in your life telling you what you don’t want to hear. They are most likely the ones telling the truth.”

The truth often hurts. But someone who cares about you sees the “big picture” has your best interests in mind. What we can’t fix on our own has the capacity to be constructed by those who love you most. So listen with an open heart, and be okay with taking a few steps back before you gracefully leap forward.

9. “Every occupation is uncertain these days so you might as well be doing what you love.”

I can vouch 100% for this. I have faced so many blockades and re-routings in my journey as an artist. But if you’re passionate about something, you do not care who or what is in your way. I get it. So pursue what you love...the world is a different place than it used to be. If you’re really passionate, you will find a way to make it work.

10. “You must be able to locate who you are in some world.”

I think this is my favorite piece of inspiration from Meryl. She spoke these words in reference to performing a scene from a play, but these words so perfectly translate into everyday life. When you are lost, when you feel defeated, you must remember what makes you special and continue on your journey to self-fulfillment. On the other hand, when you are experiencing triumph, and everything seems to be going your way, you must remember time is always fleeting. Never forget where you have come from and that a little gratitude goes a long way. Celebrate the present moment, for who you are right here and right now is all we may ever have.