

# John Graham in High Schools

Life's an adventure, John Graham says, and sometimes a risky one. The key is knowing what to take risks *for*, and how to take them well.

He should know.

As a crack mountaineer and former US diplomat, he's survived avalanches on distant peaks as well as wars and revolutions on three continents.

The lessons that Graham draws from his adventurous life are provocative, exciting, and profoundly relevant to young people leaning forward into a pivotal part of their lives.

Graham leads his high school audiences to reflect on the meaning of their own lives by telling stories, most drawn from his own path. Students love the often hair-raising, sometimes comical tales of his life-journey. Starting with his voyage as a 17-year-old seaman on a freighter in the Far East and winding through war zones, hazardous mountain climbs, conflicts at the United Nations and a shipwreck off the coast of Alaska, he finally realized that his life had to be about more than taking risks and achieving status.

It had to have *meaning* for him

Graham eventually found that meaning in service—in working for the common good, in helping solve problems that matter, in communities in the United States, and in Africa and the Middle East.

For over 20 years, as President of the Giraffe Heroes Project, he's moved thousands of people to find meaning in their lives by tackling the public problems they care about, and he's given them tools to succeed. As examples, Graham tells the inspiring stories of real heroes, young and old, who've stuck their necks out to make a difference.

Graham's approach is secular but deeply challenging. "How important to you is leading a meaningful life?" he asks students. "How do you find the right path for your one precious life?"

Service projects sparked by Graham's message fit well with mandated or voluntary school service requirements. They can help high school seniors create "culminating projects" for graduation, meshing their schoolwork with real-world actions. And they can be impressive parts of personal essays on college admissions applications.



Stick Your Neck Out



Giraffe Heroes Project

For more information,  
and to book a  
presentation by  
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# Comments from High School Students and Their Teachers

“Your words showed us how we can make a difference in the world and taught us the importance of doing work that makes us happy. You did a fantastic job and I think the students were very impressed.”

—*Christine Rasmussen, senior,  
Mercer Island High School, Mercer Island WA*

“Your stories captivated your audiences and led to many interesting conversations. We are so grateful for your help and wise words making our school’s Day of Service as relevant and meaningful as possible.”

—*Mary Margaret Welch, Counselor,  
Mercer Island High School, Mercer Island WA*

“John Graham of the Giraffe Project profoundly affected my students. His emphasis on the fact that one cannot be concerned only about local affairs separate from international issues impressed them. His stories about working with Israeli and Palestinian young people moved them. Finally, his life story of devotion to service and caring for others inspired them. I cannot imagine how a program could better help students develop a ‘heroic’ perspective.

—*high school teacher, Sherman TX*

“Live, do things, stick your neck out, make a difference.”

“Follow the passion in your life.”

“My life has an impact.”

“Without motivation life is boring.”

“One person can make a difference; it doesn’t matter how old you are.”

“Swim upstream if you have to.”

—*students at West Seattle High School,  
when asked what they learned from John Graham speech*

“Your workshop meant a lot to me because it gave me a sense of self esteem like I could accomplish anything that I REALLY set my mind to and that I could get my visions taken care of if I chose to. It helped a lot”

—*Amanda, high school participant in a  
Graham workshop, Bellingham WA*

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