“What makes it even more emotionally taxing is I woke up in the morning, I went to work and I audited banks,” Robinson said. “At the end of the day, I wasn’t really adding anything to society. I wasn’t working to make the world a better place.”

So he joined Teach for America and moved to Harlem where he began teaching at I.S. 195 Roberto Clemente.

But his first two years teaching were tough, he said. Not only was it difficult teaching 30 13-year-olds rigorous content when many of them were grades behind, but witnessing his students not engage with him or the subject matter made it even worse.

“What makes it even more emotionally taxing is knowing how important the work is and having a constant feeling that you’re failing your students,” he said.

Robinson (BSAc ’05, MAcc ’06) thought he might leave teaching and go to law school. He purposely avoided things that were hard because he didn’t want to fail or look dumb.

But becoming a teacher has forced him to change that negative attitude, he said.

To remind him that adversity leads to success, Robinson got a wrench tattooed onto his forearm. The wrench symbolizes a scene from the movie Good Will Hunting, where Matt Damon’s character chose to have his stepfather beat him with a wrench instead of a belt or stick as a show of defiance. This reminds Robinson that the struggles and difficulties of teaching prove how important and valuable the work is.

“I choose the wrench,” he said.

Keith Robinson was auditing banks during his internship at Crowe Chizek (now Crowe Horwath LLP) in Chicago when he had a revelation.

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