

Constructive Advice for the Younger Generation

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A 7-year-old boy talks with a Rotary Club member as he ties his new shoes at Dishman-McGinnis Elementary School in Bowling Green, Ky., on Nov. 5, 2014. AP Photo/Daily News, Miranda Pederson



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Commentary

As we plow ahead in the new year, it couldn't hurt young folks in the upcoming generation to pay attention to some of the keys to a fulfilling life in the modern world.

Sometimes when we are young, we tend to think that we know everything, and that older folks really don't have much to offer in the way of advice. Most of us later realize this isn't true.

I want to offer some pointers to youngsters in high school, college, and those entering the workforce—based on my experience in the real world. It just might help youngsters better navigate the future and mitigate some of the hard knocks that I endured as I matured.

First, don't act as if you are entitled to an array of benefits in life without working hard for your rewards. It's called an unearned sense of entitlement. Get into the habit of earning everything that you want in life through merit. It is critical that you form study habits in school, but also get involved with extracurricular activities that can help you grow as an individual.

Next, unless you are brilliant and have invented a widget that most consumers want, you will have to work hard to incrementally ascend the staircase of upward mobility. Do not expect to earn a high wage or be a boss right away, and don't approach your work with minimal effort. This would be called "quiet quitting" in the parlance of Millennials and Generation Z. Be early to work and be reliable regardless of the job you accept. Do more than what is required to set yourself up for success.

Third, develop self-esteem so that you aren't crushed under the wheel of competition or be taken advantage of by folks who are only out for themselves. Stand up for yourself and be confident that you have God-given talents that can be applied in school and at work. One doesn't have to be pushy in order to assert oneself in social situations. Combine assertiveness with situational awareness and tact.

Fourth, always be grateful for the blessings you have and don't worry about what you don't have. Roman statesman Marcus Cicero once

noted, “A thankful heart is not only the greatest virtue, but the parent of all other virtues.” Very often in life, we don’t get what we want, but we get what we need to keep pushing forward. Practicing gratitude is crucial because you never know when a windfall might come your way.

Fifth, expect the unexpected. Life is riddled with surprises both negative and positive. Learn to roll with the punches when surprises come your way. If an obstacle presents itself, strive to meet the challenge instead of surrendering to apathy or self-pity. Meeting hurdles head-on can build character and help keep you positive when the next roadblock appears.

Sixth, strive to limit time spent on electronic devices in favor of reading and writing. French philosopher Rene Descartes stated, “The reading of all good books is like a conversation with the finest minds of past centuries.” Take time to read good books, magazines, and newspapers to cultivate your mind, which can also reduce the social media fixation. Reading can keep you well-informed and can also help you become a better writer.

Seventh, value both mental and physical labor. Putting in an honest day’s work can do wonders for your morale. Even if you aren’t a genius, you can heed Thomas Edison’s quote regarding effort. He said, “Genius is one percent inspiration, and ninety-nine percent perspiration.” In other words, hard work can generate success despite failures (learning experiences) along the way.

Eighth, wake up with a purpose. Arise each day with a purpose and you will likely overcome the twists of fate. Forging a purpose can keep you disciplined, organized, and prepared as you tackle each daily task. Pastor Rick Warren often delivered sermons and authored books regarding the purpose-driven life. Purpose gives you a plan of action and adds hope and meaning to our daily lives.

Ninth, develop social relationships not just for the sake of what you can take from these interactions, but what you can offer to others. All faiths promote the concept that it is better to give than to receive.

Moreover, having a few good friends is better than having none at all. Volunteering to assist other folks in your spare time is indeed a win-win situation. In most cases, you will feel fulfilled by doing something beyond yourself, and the recipient will appreciate your beneficial actions.

Tenth, take care of your health through regular exercise, hydration, good balanced nutrition, and relaxation. Avoid the temptations of alcohol, drugs, and smoking. It is much easier to succeed in school and in an occupation if you develop consistent habits and are practicing a healthy lifestyle.

Eleventh, learn how to invest and save the money that you earn as you start your productive journey. Study how investors such as Warren Buffett, Ken Fisher, and others have smartly invested and managed assets over the long-term. Anyone can build assets if they avoid debt, as they save and spend in a wise manner.

Last but not least, respect yourself and others. If you tend to wear pajamas to class, shed that habit as soon as possible. It isn't considered cool in the real world as it reflects a slovenly attitude. Dress appropriately, and it will help you make progress in any environment. Happy New Year, as you pursue your worthwhile dreams!

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