

Things to remember if you've just graduated university

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Congratulations on graduating university. You've been preparing to step into the real world your entire life. No matter how many self-help articles you've read or unwarranted advice you've received from well-meaning family members, you can't help but feel a sense of uncertainty plaguing your days. You keep thinking, *what now?*

Transitions are always tricky. So, before you step into the world of incessant paperwork and late-night emails, calm down, grab a cup of tea and remind yourself the following.

TAKE A BREATHER

For the first time in a very long time, you don't have a clearly defined path ahead of you. There's no routine scheduling which classes you should take, no syllabus outlining which books you should read, and no WhatsApp group with sympathetic friends guiding you through calculus. You have had your entire life mapped out for you - until now. When that realisation sets in and you sense an approaching panic attack, fight it. Remember: everyone else is exactly where you are. Give yourself a break.

LIFE IS NOT A HIGHLIGHT REEL

Repeat after me: no one is living the life that their social media insists they are. Beating yourself up over a carefully curated Instagram feed, complete with spectacular excursions and decadent desserts, isn't healthy. Chances are, that trip was part of a company visit for a job your friend finds marginally fulfilling and that dessert is one of many photos from an ancient outing recycled for instant social media validation. Trust me, your life isn't more difficult than anyone else's. Everyone has their own trials and tribulations to conquer.

YOUR ACTIONS DEFINE YOU

Let me guess. You're rolling your eyes wondering why I would waste paper writing down such generic advice, but hear me out. Remember that time you

agreed to help your friend with his assignment only to bail last minute? Or that time you promised to design a logo for your sister's online business only to forget for the nth time? In the real world, particularly the professional world you're about to venture into, make commitments with the intent to see it through. Most of the time, you'll be held to your word. No matter how much you want to please your boss by taking on more than you can deliver, always ask yourself, "Can I follow this through?" If the answer is "No", take a rain check.

THE REAL WORLD ISN'T AS SCARY AS IT SEEMS

People will often take pride in reminding you that life isn't fun and games after graduation. Do yourself a favour and tune them out. Is the real world all carnival rides and candy-flavoured lattes? No. Was it before you graduated? Still no. Ignore those who've bought into the lie that a job is where souls go to die. Your work will be frustrating one moment and fulfilling the next.

Contrary to popular belief, it is possible to find meaning in your job. All you have to do is try. First step? Avoid the naysayers.

YOU'RE ALLOWED TO FALTER

If you think your first spring post-graduation is an invisible clock ticking away until you embrace adulthood, I've got news for you. There's no ultimate deadline for you to figure out your life. You'll make mistakes, miss out on opportunities and possibly burn a few bridges before you get to a state of mind you're comfortable with.

Life is an intricate balancing act that we're all trying to navigate. So, calm down and give yourself time to get it right.

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Growing tired of friends

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An unprecedented change that I have encountered in the past year is coming in terms with the fact that I've grown tired of many of my friends. It's not an easy thing to accept, especially during the period when friends are expected to form the core of one's social network.

It doesn't mean that the relationships have been terminated or that there's bad blood. It's an awareness that not all relationships work.

I experienced this during my undergrad years, particularly the last year, when I was faced with living it up while I can and making responsible choices simultaneously. After speaking to multiple people about these developing sentiments, I came to understand that this happens in different ways for many. We don't often talk about it but a little reassessment and reengagement is essential from time to time.

WHY DO WE GROW TIRED OF FRIENDS?

This was the question I mulled over for a long time. I think we feel this sense of resignation largely because of personal growth. As maturity dawns upon us, we begin to see the world around us differently while adjusting to responsibilities and recalculating priorities. It's during this transitory phase that we often learn who will stick around through thick and thin. In reality, most people we acquire as "friends" are not really up for that kind of investment on bonds. Ultimately, we either let them go or we maintain a cordial relationship. An outcome of personal growth is often a keen understanding of what we seek and more often than not, most people end up not fitting the bill.

Usually the relationships disintegrate organically. It's marked by occasional meetings or just saying hi when out and about. Some require more effort and need to be severed, especially when you identify toxicity in it. There are multiple ways in which the execution takes place but they stem from similar reasons. Once we have more on our plates, we evaluate what matters and we adjust accordingly. We don't want to maintain relationships that don't feel good and are high maintenance. It's perfectly normal to want less things to handle on a day-to-day basis.

LEARNING TO DEAL WITH IT

Initially this can be disheartening and difficult, particularly if your close friends are not in the same phase in life as you. Some won't be very understanding and this will cause rifts in some cases. Others will be okay with letting you be and will pick up where you left off when the time is right. The best thing to do is to just embrace it. It's important to respect one's own boundaries just as much as it is to respect others'. Relationships are not meant to be forced and if it's not working, just let it go. Taking some time off can even help improve relationships that feel strained.

It's important to remember that undergoing this process doesn't necessarily mean that one's friend circle is going to shrink. It can even force one to socialise more and expand their network. At the same time not all relationships will disintegrate but one can develop a better understanding or a new perspective on how they engage with their existing circles and on relationships they build in the future. Ultimately, this can even help develop emotional intelligence - and that always pays off.

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