



After years spent working and dreaming, months of testing, applying, stressing, and anticipating, it will soon be time to begin your college career. You are likely experiencing an avalanche of feelings: excitement, apprehension, joy, melancholy, eagerness, and fear. Let me assure you, these emotions are normal and expected as you prepare to embark on this major life transition.

These past few weeks, many of you have shared that your greatest fear is failure and I have been quick to point out that there is no need to fear failure; you WILL fail...and you will be just fine. That's right, you will fail at *something*. You may fail to turn a paper in on time, you may fail a quiz or test, you may have a failed relationship, or a job that doesn't work out. It may take you a while to "find your place" or you may feel like a failure if you don't immediately have someone to sit with at lunch. Yes, failure is the only certainly as you approach this or any challenge.

When we accept that we will fail, we no longer judge ourselves by our failures. Instead, as we navigate over, under, and around the new challenges that failure present, we learn to appreciate our personal resiliency and perseverance, uncover our personal strengths, and celebrate our growth.

Throughout our lives, we have each heard stories of people who have inspired us. These stories are rarely, if ever, stories of a direct ascent to success. The stories that inspire us most are stories of people who have had trials, tribulations, and challenges to overcome. Most report having moments when they had to ask themselves, "How badly do I want this?" You too, will have those moments. Successful people often look back at a few pivotal moments in their lives when they could have given up or taken the easy way, and they chose to press on – to find a way.

During your college career, you will certainly experience times that you feel overwhelmed, scared, intimidated or just plain lazy and will have to ask yourself, "how badly do I want this?" What will it mean to earn a college education? How

will my life be different five, ten, fifteen years down the road? What impact will my post-secondary education have on me, my family, and/or my community? What will it feel like to walk the length of the stage at my university and accept, what for many will be, the first college diploma in my family?

When faced with failure, disappointment, or great challenge the best advice I can give you is to STOP. Don't STOP and give up! STOP is an acronym.

S: Stop.

T: Take a Breath.

O: Observe (How do I feel? Angry? Frustrated? Scared? Lonely? Stupid?) Observe your thoughts without judgment as they are only thoughts – they are not facts. Let them go.

P: Proceed mindfully. (What is important to me now? How do I want to proceed now?)

Remaining calm and confident through life's turbulence will allow you to reasonably evaluate a situation, decide on a course of action, and move on purposefully and confidently. Now is the time to trust yourself, your preparation, and your resiliency. While there will most certainly be bumps in the road, disappointments, uncertain moments, and yes, failure - you are ready! You have been through difficult times before and prevailed - you will again!

When you arrive on campus feeling a bit anxious, take comfort that your feelings are a sign that you are about to embark on something new and exciting! It is only by stepping outside our comfort zones that we fail, flourish, and grow.

Live Well/ Be Well,

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