



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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From the Desk of Senator Jack M. Martins

JACK M. MARTINS July 1, 2015

Thoughts for Recent Graduates

It's graduation season once again but this year holds special meaning for my family as we celebrate that milestone in our own lives. My oldest daughter just graduated from high school and like other parents, my wife and I had mixed emotions; pride as she received her diploma, anxiety about her being on her own, sadness that she won't be living at home anymore, and just plain old amazement that we're old enough to have a high school graduate!

It's been a bit of a roller coaster for our daughter too; she's excited to graduate and head off to college, sad that she and her classmates will no longer be together every day, and nervous about what the future holds. It's a difficult transition to be sure so I wanted to share some of the tried and true lessons I've learned over the years from people far wiser than me.

Never stop learning; ever.

Graduation doesn't mean you know everything. Learning doesn't just take place in a school, and it doesn't just come from books. It happens every day through experiences, interactions, and situations. Life is the ultimate classroom, and the tests can be very hard; make sure you're paying attention.

Build Your Own Future, but whatever it is, work hard and believe in yourself.

Parents and teachers give you a foundation for success. How you build on it is entirely up to you. In anything and everything, do it with passion and work hard – but most of all, be confident in yourself. After all, amateurs built the ark and professionals, the Titanic. I think Henry Ford summed it up perfectly; “Whether you think you can or you think you can’t, you’re right.”

Don’t be afraid to fail.

This is easier said than done, because failure is embarrassing. But remember, even the most successful people have failed at some point. Steve Jobs was fired from the company he founded. Abraham Lincoln failed in business, had a nervous breakdown, and lost eight different elections before becoming one of our greatest presidents. And Michael Jordan missed the game winning shot 26 times in his career. Failure is not fatal; how you respond to it can be. If you fail, learn from it and come back stronger. As Babe Ruth once said, “It’s hard to beat a person who never gives up.”

Be someone’s hero.

Think of who your heroes and role models are. I’m not talking athletes, musicians, or movie stars; you don’t need to be famous to be a hero. It could be your parents, a relative, a teacher, a coach. Whoever they are, you’re a better person because of them. Starting now, give that same gift to someone else. Not only will they benefit but it’ll encourage you to live up to your true potential.

Steal with your eyes.

An old, Italian plumber taught me this one. Whatever task you’re engaged in, you’ll probably be at the heels of older, more capable mentors. Don’t waste the opportunity. Whether you’re running an election campaign or fixing a sink, somebody knows it better than you so watch carefully and ask lots of questions because attention is the single most

important element in learning.

Remember where you come from, and give back.

You come from some place; a family, a school, a neighborhood. Wherever you go, no matter how far away, it will always be part of you. Remember it, use it, and most importantly, give back to it.

So to those pursuing higher education, I wish you good luck in your studies; to your parents, good luck paying for it (I share in your pain!). To those entering the workforce, I wish you life-long success and satisfaction. And to those joining the military, thank you for serving our country and please stay safe.

No matter your pursuit, this is an exciting moment in your lives but remember it's only a moment. Celebrate what you've accomplished but buckle up because the ride is just beginning.

No regrets. Enjoy every minute of it!