

Graduation Station!

-Finding the Fast Track to a Successful Future-

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Congratulations- You made it to graduation! This is an exciting time in the life of any senior, as it should be, however, that excitement can quickly turn to panic, disappointment or regret if you don't have a clear plan of what to do next on your journey into the next chapter of life.

Picture it this way; if you've ever been in a busy subway station you know that trains come barreling through the station continually, but not all trains will take you to where you really want to go. Some cities have different colored trains, others have the next station posted on a sign, and still others have a number to indicate which stop comes next. You have to pay careful attention to know where you want to go to catch the right train, because if you aren't paying attention you could end up in the wrong neighborhood miles from home feeling confused, lost and alone. There are many trains, but only one that will take you where you need to go. Finding that train and getting on the right track is essential if you want to experience success early in life.

Fearful Crash or Fulfilling Career?

Graduations feel like the end of your journey, and at this particular school and part of life- it is. Yet your real journey into life is just beginning, so here's the important question, "*do you know what to do to get to where you want to go?*" If you don't know, then the next step is to take positive action to move past the fear and panic about the future to find the peaceful calm of knowing for sure that you are on the right track headed in a positive direction. So, are you ready to find out if you are mature enough to map out a good life? Let's get started and find out!

Moving away from home, from friends, from family and everything you've grown up around is exciting if you are ready; or completely terrifying if you aren't. It would be like riding a huge roller coaster without the safety harness, where you are hanging on for your life- not fun just a terrible ride. Yet, this is how a lot of young people feel as they leave home to chase their dreams- scared to death!

Graduation should be a time of joy, but for those who aren't ready, it's a time of fear and dread, although most seniors in this situation just tend to cover it up with big talk about what they are going to do '*one day*' or they just sit in fearful silence hoping that no one will actually ask them about their future plans so they don't have to tell a lie about what they think sounds good to appease their conscience

or silence their parents, teachers or friends who are just asking about their future plans.

This time of major life transition after graduation is very good news for those who are fully developed and mature, because they will be welcomed into many places that they may have never dreamed possible as a student; and be experiencing a successful life at a much younger age than they ever realized! One of my favorite things is to watch a focused young man or woman move forward into a good life because of making wise choices followed up with disciplined effort. They didn't just work hard, they worked strategically as we mapped out their goals and they went out to accomplish them one by one.

Coaching a young person toward living out their dreams is a great joy, however, one of the hardest things is to watch graduates who act immature and self-absorbed and end up crashing their lives at a young age. Some make such irresponsible and reckless choices that it actually costs them their life, however, most don't die from going down wrong roads, they just miss out on experiencing their fullest potential and delay the blessings of a good life for months, years or even decades.

Some people who have big dreams at graduation will literally spend the next twenty years jumping from job to job, substance to substance or marriage to marriage desperately seeking the happiness that is available right now if only they knew how to choose the right track toward a successful future.

The Right Path leads to Right Results

If you want to experience greater success at an early age then you have to pick the right path, which always leads to the right results. And, I might add, that right path always begins with you! So how can you find out if you are ready to 'launch' into a successful life? Rapid evaluation and honest feedback is the fastest way I have discovered in working with hundreds of graduates through the years to determine if you, *(or someone in your family)*, is mature enough to move on to the next level of a good life.

We will start by evaluating the top 39 factors that indicate how far along you are in your thinking, including life balance, personal responsibility and developmental maturity. These factors show clearly if you are ready for a good life on the 'fast track' to success, or if you will end up crashing like a majority of young people who had big dreams, but not enough maturity to reach them yet.

This is an important point because one study indicated that 89% of kids from good homes walk away from their core values and crash just like the crowd when they move away from their parents home, *(see the book, "Right from Wrong", by Josh McDowell for the full details of this shocking research and more importantly what to do about it to prevent you or someone you love from being swept away*

by the swift current of a culture that isn't designed to lead young people toward success, but rather to experience early failure). If you are ready to move forward in a responsible way to build a successful future, then the following profile will reveal that you are fully developed or mature and ready for a good life.

However, if the results show a great deal of undisciplined or irresponsible actions, then it may be time to sit down with a pastor, counselor or coach to map out how to gain new skills to prevent crashing in the next few years like so many others will do who don't have any guidance or direction. This requires tremendous insight and honesty, but can be a huge breakthrough to living out greater success after you pass 'graduation station'.

This may be the most important exercise in the process of packing up your stuff to move out on your own, or move on to college because it is based on one of the most overlooked secret to success, honest assessment. Checking for mature and responsible behavior is a quick way to reveal your ability to actually make progress toward your goals. I believe many of the people who achieve short term success but then are never heard from again, actually never sat down to do this type of evaluation. Spend some time on this project, because you are about to gain some tremendous insights about the key issues that may be holding you, or a family member back from a better way of life.

Ready? Then take a breath and dive in to examine a comprehensive profile on the behaviors needed to move past the self destructive behavior of many who crash after graduation to become one who experiences success from a new level of insight and growth.

Are you fully developed?			
Simply check off in one of the columns to indicate the level of development that you, your family member or teammate has achieved in the key areas of life listed below. Be honest! There are three levels of behavior from which to choose.			
➤ Immature behavior includes: Very irresponsible, impulsive or dangerous actions			
➤ Growing behavior includes: Building a sense of responsibility and accountability			
➤ Mature behavior includes: Fully developed life with a disciplined sense of destiny			
Life Quality	Immature	Growing	Mature
Physical health and fitness, (diet, sleep, exercise)			
Physical & dental healthcare, (regular check-ups)			
Personal hygiene and cleanliness, (body & clothing)			
Substance use (alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, sugar)			
Self-discipline, (exercise, food, spending)			
Ability to say "no" to impulses, (sex, gambling, rage)			
Personal choices, (clothing, driving habits, etc)			
Media choices, (Internet, TV, radio, magazines)			
Emotional control, (anger, guilt, worry, stress)			

Positive self-concept and personal confidence
Spiritual interest and awareness
Spiritual insight and growth in personal faith
Communication ability, (individually & in groups)
Wise use of words, (avoids slang or cursing)
Relationship skills, (unselfishly giving and caring)
Relationship development, (personal friendships)
Choices in friends
Care/love for spouse or family
Helpful and kind to others in need
True joy in the success of others
Honoring of parents and family of origin
Follows etiquette and protocol with others
Work ethic, (job, school and at home)
Financial management skills
Income development and earning level
Career development to further build skill set
Wise career choices
Organizational ability, (over clutter & distractions)
Ability to manage time & schedule
Attention span to details or listening skills
Educational ability or level of training
Relationship development, (career networking)
Ability to admit being wrong
Ability to accept others who are different
Ability to establish and complete goals
Ability to manage change successfully
Ability to face and manage conflict with others
Ability to gather facts and make good decisions
Character development and personal integrity

Count the number in each category to see which column had the most responses

Immature = _____ Growing = _____ Mature = _____

If you found that you, or someone that you care about, was mostly in the **immature stage**- get some immediate help! This isn't going to be easy and you need a sound strategy to be able to handle the length of time it takes to climb up to a more responsible level of living.

If you or the person that you evaluated was mostly at the **growing level**, the strategy is to continue on with healthy choices and responsible behavior, to keep things growing smoothly to become fully developed and mature. This may take some time, but stay with it because the payoff is huge!

If you or the person that you evaluated was mostly at the **mature level**, count your blessings! It is rare to have every one of the key areas of life working well and strong. There is a caution though, try not to not carry the responsibility of others who may try taking advantage of your quiet strength. *(You may also want to ask a trusted*

friend or family member to take this assessment, in case there are hidden areas you may have missed or perhaps where you over-estimated your strength levels). If you are blessed to be at the mature level in every area, then your goal is to help others become responsible as well as you live out a lifestyle of early success.

Forget the boredom as you get on track for the ride of your life!

Now that you have moved from the 'fog' of not really knowing if you are ready to move forward toward early success in life you are able to identify which one of four major tracks you are currently traveling.

1. The CRASH TRACK is where a majority of graduates end up within a year of their commencement. They are making wrong choices, with wrong people and headed in a heartbreaking wrong direction. Some travel this broad path of wasting time, energy and effort out of boredom and others out of fear of being alone, but a high score of immaturity and undeveloped or irresponsible behavior simply says that you aren't ready to move forward toward early success, and without a clear path and strong leadership you will experience a great deal of difficulty in the next few months or years. The CRASH TRACK is a hard road to travel and I urge you to seek professional guidance now if your scores say that you aren't ready to launch out into life. It's not a weakness to ask for help if you know that you are going to crash, it's a sign of strength and maturity, so speak up before you make wrong choices and blow up.

2. The RIGHT TRACK is an indicator that many of your scores were in the middle category of growing in strength, maturity and personal development. It's a good sign that you are moving forward toward a good life, just aren't completely ready to launch out on your own yet. That's okay and normal so don't worry about the score, rather focus your energy and attention on taking positive action to grow stronger in the areas of personal responsibility to indicate that you are moving forward toward early success after graduation. Once you have identified the areas to work on, move from being defensive or lying about these weaknesses to being proactive to do something about it. You can change and you can improve if you allow mentors to give you helpful critiques and correction to get started moving in the right direction on the right road, which always will bring the right results. If you are on the RIGHT TRACK... keep walking it and don't slow down!

3. The TEST TRACK is where your scores show that you have even more categories of personal growth, responsibility and maturity checked off and are already experimenting with the type of behaviors in line with your career choices. This is the stage where you are likely doing internships, volunteer work or even part-time work within your chosen career field to grow in experience, skill and personal confidence. This stage can be frustrating at times, since you may have always thought that you wanted to be a doctor because of watching medical shows on television, but while job shadowing find out that you can't handle the

sights or smells involved. It's okay to admit that you have changed your mind about a career field and it's important to not see that as a failure, it's just a course correction. True failure is to keep your insecurities bottled up inside and stay in a job that isn't a good fit so you don't have to face the fears of changing direction. Better to change now to find out the fulfilling path of doing what you were born to do than to stay in a dead-end job to avoid feeling uncomfortable as you take the TEST TRACK to make sure that you are growing stronger to zoom forward on the right track for a life time.

4. The FAST TRACK is what this process is all about! I hope you are already on the fast track as you walk across the stage at graduation, since you cannot imagine how desperately I want to see you figure your life out now so that you can have early career success. It's what I wake up thinking about and what I go to bed focused on. As I'm writing this, my prayer is that you will take this chance to really deal with your life straight up, no games. That this will be your time to seriously discipline yourself under the coaching and direction necessary to enjoy early and lasting success as you move from "Graduation Station" to live the life that your parents, teachers and most of all God wants to you experience on the FAST TRACK.

Don't take this lightly. Your journey isn't going to be easy. It's not going to be fun and games. It's going to involve every ounce of your physical, mental, spiritual and emotional ability if you really want to win at life in your twenties, as well as a ton of preparation and study time. And you thought that school was over! Term papers aren't forever, but successful young people are always learning new insights, so, to get you started consider these hard realities you are now facing.

Guaranteed on the FastTrack- some or all of the following...

Sweat, discomfort from hot/humid or cold/wet climate changes, bumps, scrapes, bruises, blisters, bugs, sunburn, windburn, hurt feelings, crushing loneliness, cash-strapped, scared to death, being broken hearted and used by so-called friends, and did I mention the hard work part?

It's all part of the experience. Are you up for it?

Oh yeah, it will also involve the other set of extremes that come when you begin to really live your life instead of just pretending to live it.

Outrageous joy, heart-stopping excitement, red-hot passion, life & death decisions, financial rewards, intense love, habitual laughter, overwhelming connection to God through His Son Jesus, as well as the respect and admiration from your family and friends.

Sounding better?

And it's not going to be boring.
Ever. Never-ever!

Because when you are having the time of your life, you don't have time to whine! Have you ever noticed that boring people are always complaining about how unhappy they are, but never seem to be spending any time or energy doing something about it? I believe it's because they are slowly sinking on the CRASH TRACK. Just one more whiner waiting to bust their life wide open and become yet another statistic of a generation stuck in their twenties.

Listen to me! You can beat those odds if you are ready to get serious about your future. You don't have to fail early in life, you can take a different path and you can change. You can experience a really good life on the FAST TRACK if you are willing to accept the responsibility that graduation now gives you the chance to prove what you have learned and to show that you are ready to build a great future as you move beyond school stress to build career success on the fast track to the life you were born to enjoy.

This is your time so know that I'm already cheering for you on the FAST TRACK to SUCCESS!

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