

## The One Thing...

As one who has experienced his fair share, graduation time brings back a lot of fond memories. I cannot say that I fondly remember the class time as much as I feel blessed when thinking of the family, friends, and mentors that helped me to succeed through each stage of life. Reflecting upon coaches, parents, teachers, teammates, siblings, ex-girlfriends, colleagues, and an assortment of other characters always brings a smile to my face. I am the man I am today because of them all.

In our early years, it seems that each stage in life is marked by some type of ceremony and a piece of paper that symbolizes moving on to the next more exciting stage life has to offer. Come to think of it, the same circumstance happens when we get married, get promoted, lose a job, and even when we pass on. I guess you could say that even we middle aged and older folks are continuously waiting for that next graduation ceremony.

Every time I reflect on "the old days," usually with old friends and red wine, I try to remember the ups and downs so that I may some day pass that acquired knowledge to my kids. Let's be honest, I have no delusions that my advice will stick. We all know that true learning comes from experience and my kids are no more special than anyone else's. In other words, they will not listen to the ramblings of their old man.

So what to do? In today's world you've got to keep it brief. Any tip from an elder should be brief and applicable, even better if that knowledge comes from someone other than Mom and Dad. So what is the one thing I've learned that I wish I knew back when I moved on from New Braunfels Canyon High? It's such a simple thing...

You control your destiny, your success and failure, and your level of happiness in life.

That's it. If every one of those bright and smiling faces, walking across those stages all across America could wrap their minds around that simple fact, our world will be a better place. It all comes down to personal responsibility. Things will not always go as planned. The government will not bail us out. Life happens and all we can do is deal with it. Take responsibility, make things right, and move on.

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Obviously, this is an oversimplification of life, but it's a start. We could certainly delve into the spiritual or metaphysical side of this advice, but there are not enough pages in this paper to do that. Besides, a lot of smarter men and women than me have explored that subject far better than my talent allows.

So that's it. Pass your graduate a simple handwritten note with these simple words: You control your destiny, your success and failure, and your level of happiness in life. Maybe someday they'll look back, unfold that slip of paper from their wallet or purse, and smile. That's the best a parent can do.

Until next week, keep smiling.

-Comments can be sent to Drs. Parrish through their website: [www.ParrishDental.com](http://www.ParrishDental.com).