

Ah, graduation day. You have waited for this day for so long! Finally, your name will be called for your diploma or certificate and you will walk across this stage. But right now, you get to sit there and look amazing and handsome and beautiful in your caps and gowns - and listen to one last lecture from me.

In the movie *Star Wars*, a Jedi Master named Yoda said, “Do. Or do not. There is no try.” Have you ever known anyone to receive a prize or a medal or any recognition for TRYING to do anything? Success has never come to anyone who has *tried* to write a book, or who has *tried* to pass a test, or who has *tried* to finish a race. So whatever you are aiming for next, my suggestion to you is this, don’t say you’ll *try* to do it – say “I’ll **do** it.”

I’ve put together a list of five pieces of advice and suggestions for **how** to do it. I hope they are helpful to you. I’ll take them from number 5 down to number 1.

Number 5. Don’t be afraid of failure. Hockey great Wayne Gretsky said, “You miss 100 percent of the shots you *never* take.” You are probably going to fail a time or two in life; it’s inevitable, when you are aiming to achieve success. But if you fail, make it because you were doing something and not because you just gave up. Make sure it’s because you were taking a shot, and not because you were sitting on the bench. You are also going to make mistakes. When you make a mistake, admit it, apologize, learn from it, and then - move on! That way, you’re not likely to make the same mistake again.

Number 4. Listen when someone is talking to you. I mean really listen; don't think about what you are going to say next, and don't just sit there and zone out. Life is not a television show you can TiVo, you cannot rewind it and find out what you missed. If you are getting instructions from your boss, believe me, you don't want to say, "Can you repeat that? I wasn't listening." **Listen** to your managers and to your fellow employees. In fact, I advise you to do nothing *but* listen for at least your first six months on a new job. Refrain from talking about yourself, your boss, the horrible coffee, or gossiping about anyone else in the office, refrain from giving your ideas on how you think the filing could be done better or how the computer software could be upgraded. Believe me, when you listen, you can impress people a lot more than *anything* you can say about yourself. Calvin Coolidge said, "No man ever listened himself out of a job." Your professional reputation is a precious commodity and six months is a small price to pay for it.

Number 3. Be willing to do whatever it takes to be in the game. Show up, and be ready to play, even if you aren't the first one picked for the team, or even if you don't get the position you tried out for. If you want a job as an office manager and the only job available is in the mailroom, then by all means, take the mailroom clerk job. And then, be the best mailroom clerk that company has ever had. Dress up, be early and stay late every day, ask your supervisor "what else can I do?" when you finish your work. And when the next management job opens up, you'll be right there. Jobs don't go to people who have amazing talents, great resumes, and who are sitting

at home waiting for the perfect job to come to them. Jobs go to people who are there when the boss decides there's another job opening, then hears from the mailroom supervisor about this amazing employee who comes in early, stays late, sorts the mail fastest, then asks for and takes on new projects.

Number 2. Sometime what might *look* like failure is just an unexpected change in direction. In 1976, there was a news reporter making \$25,000 a year in Baltimore. The television executives decided she was not quite what they wanted for their network. She didn't have the right "look" and they didn't think she was successful as a news anchor. So, they stuck her on a talk show to as a way to run out her contract. Her name was Oprah Winfrey. She found that she had a flair for talk shows; the rest was, as we say, history. Oprah has not only re-defined success for African-American women, she has also created success for authors, psychologists, and even, some might say, for a president. Sometimes life is not exactly as we had anticipated and that is not a bad thing. Be open to those changes in direction and be kind to yourself in defining successes and failures. Often what we see as roadblocks just steer us in the direction we are meant to go.

Number 1. No job in the world is more important than spending time with the people you love and who love you. Back in Colorado, I worked in a couple of huge law firms where you were expected to be there 60 hours a week. People brought their children to the office on the weekends, to watch videos in their offices instead of taking them to the park or the zoo. I used to bring my dog to work

with me. After a couple years of that life, I realized that it wasn't for me. Maybe someone out there thrives on that lifestyle, but I will tell you that children and dogs are not meant to spend weekends in an office. Don't sacrifice your family or your dogs for a job. You can never get that time back again, and those relationships are worth so much more than any job. Balancing work and life and family is a tricky thing, but many of you are already doing it with school, work, and family. Make sure that you check that balance every so often to be sure you are doing whatever is right for you, to keep you healthy and happy.

Well there you are; my five pieces of advice to you. Each one of you is *absolutely* capable of continued success on your own terms. I agree with another *Star Wars* character, a Jedi Knight named Obi-Wan Kenobi, who said, "In my experience, there's no such thing as luck." Don't depend on luck to move you forward now. You've worked too hard to be here today. This is the time to take action, to take the next step!

I believe in you, I know you can do whatever you want to achieve. Your teachers believe in you. Your family and your friends believe in you. Everyone at Empire College who has helped you in every office you have passed through from the book store to Financial Aid to Career Services, believes in you. But in the end, it's all up to you - you must believe in you. Pick up your pen, your tools of your trade, your light saber, and get out there. Don't *try* - just do it. The world is waiting. And May the Force Be With You.