

The 20 Things I Wish Someone Told Me at 20

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Close and Critical Read Directions

1. Show Confusion
2. Comment, Question and Connect
3. Write a one sentence summary

As college doors start to swish and swing open, slurping young people back in for fall classes, I feel compelled to put my hand up and say, "Wait, you forgot something."

I have something I want to tell them before they head back up the university's hill to walk new halls, meet new faces and make new decisions that could change their lives. As they pack up their cars for campus, I want to plop myself down in their front seats and tell them what they need to know. *What I wish I had known.*

Here is what I would say:

Precious young person, before you leave, can you turn off your phone and let me share something valuable with you? I know you think I am too old to understand you, but I promise, some days I feel closer to your age than I do my own. I haven't forgotten.

What I see in front of me is a life that is valuable and worth more than you can possibly know today. I hope to save you a lot of time, pain and regret, if you listen to what I wish I'd heard before I put the car into drive ...

The 20 Things I Wish Someone Told Me at 20:

1. **Hold tight to your real friends and don't forget the closeness that you feel now.** It is real, and over time, life will try to tease those connections away. They will mean everything.
2. **Although you're smart ... your brain isn't done maturing. Listen to your parents more than you want. REALLY.** Your brain doesn't fully connect all of the dots until you're about 23. Trust me. Trust THEM.
3. **Keep the joy of being 'in the moment.'** You will have to focus on the future so much as you get older – being mindful to the moment becomes a lost gift (you do this better than we do).
4. **You will miss your youthful body one day -- love it and take care of it.** There will come a day when you become nostalgic for all of those body parts that you don't like now. Take care of them, exercise and enjoy the freedom of your abilities.
5. **If someone has cut you down, that is about THEM, not YOU.** Unkind words are often used to cut a strong person down to make the insecure one feel better. Don't let them stick.
6. **Apologize: mean it & make it better.** Say "I'm sorry," drop your ego and fix things humbly, without excuses.
7. **Education is THAT important.** With 100% certainty, you will be proud of your degrees ... and you will regret it if you don't complete them.
8. **You can say NO** You own your body. Walking away is tough in the moment, but your spirit will thank you. And, trust me, in later years, those decisions will fill you ... with pride.

9. **Whatever you POST is PERMANENT.** Envision that picture, video or comment being pushed across the desk to you as you interview for your first job.
10. **Trust the calling on your heart.** Don't quiet the voice inside your spirit. DO the work to get where you are called to go ... even if it is not where someone else thinks you should be going.
- ...
12. **Travel.** Seize any (safe) opportunity to journey to a new place, immerse in a new culture, or experience new landscape. Your mind will open in immeasurable ways.
13. **Don't poison yourself. Don't smoke. Don't take drugs. Don't drink soda.** Toxins affect your outward beauty, the way you radiate, and the way that people experience you. Treat your body as purely as possible. It will show.
14. **Consider the other side of the story.** Listen to someone that you don't agree with - ask them where they came from and why they feel the way they do, without judgment. Be OPEN.
15. **Talk yourself out of the need to compare yourself.** Strive to be the best YOU, not a copy of the person next to you. Know your strengths. Don't belittle your weaknesses.
16. **Talk to your educators. Ask for help. Be known and be memorable.** By being known, teachers will be more invested in you and your success. You might also gain a mentor.
17. **Love your parents. Love your grandparents.** Look them in the eye and listen to their stories. Honor their lives and the legacies of those before you. You never know when it is going to be too late.
18. **People will treat you the way that you allow them to.** You have half the power to determine how every relationship goes as a whole. Be empowered to keep positive people close and negative people at bay. *You do have a choice.*
19. **Pay attention to how people treat their parents ... and their waiters.** The way a potential partner treats his/her parents is a good predictor of how they will be in a marriage. The way they treat a waiter (or any service person) shows you their character.
20. **Listen to your still, small voice.** ... Trust those GUT feelings. Your intuition is your superpower – use it and you will diminish your chance for regret ... and increase your chance for wonderfulness.

Summary:

Write a one sentence summary of this article.

Writing Response:

Think about the things Smithson wished she was taught by the age of twenty. Now, you have made it high school. Think about some of the lessons and experiences that have helped you get here. Create a list for your younger self (much like this one) that emphasizes 5-10 of these important experiences and lessons.