

Your Next Challenge as a Warrior: The Aftermath of Graduating

#WellbeingWarriors

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Quote by Jim Rohn: "Your life does not get better by chance, it gets better by change."

Attention all Final Year Students...

This article is especially for our soon-to-be graduates! You are fast approaching your final exams; one more hurdle to cross then you can feel the freedom. Bliss, right? This period can be a rollercoaster of emotions – filled with excitement, anxiety, anticipation, exhaustion, or hopefulness. For many years you knew what was expected of you; you had to follow a schedule, complete assignments, write tests, and abide by certain rules. However, what happens now, after graduation? Obtaining your qualification is an incredible achievement; you should celebrate and be proud. With the closing of this chapter, you are beginning to narrate your new chapter. Let's have a look at the holistic view you can take to help you prepare for this next phase.

The most obvious answer would be – find employment! And yes, that is an excellent step in the right direction. However, readiness for life after university is about so much more. It's about adjustment, autonomy, unfamiliarity, smart decision-making, a realistic mindset and persisting in demanding environments.

Adjusting to Change

Numerous changes await you after university. These could include different accommodation, financial responsibilities, new environments, a changed routine, being independent and forming new social circles. For some of you, this sounds like an exciting new challenge, while for others, this may be terrifying. Regardless of your emotions, change during this time is inevitable, and you would need to rise to the occasion. To assist in making this adjustment to change more manageable, avoid comparing yourself to others. Focus on your strengths and opportunities, making the best of your situation. Reach out to people who have gained experience within the areas you are struggling to adapt; you don't have to reinvent the wheel by yourself. Here are some more tips on [how to deal with change](#).

From Graduate to Jobseeker

The [unemployment- and work-seekers rate](#) of South Africa is a continuous challenge. Having a qualification gives you an advantage, but does not guarantee that you will find employment after university. At this point, it is essential to focus on that which is within your control. This includes creating a curriculum vitae, networking, undertaking internship opportunities, doing your research and applying for a variety of different positions. Make use of [UFS Career Services](#). They assist with creating a cv/resumé, interviewing skills, career fairs and much more.

Realistic Expectations

The ideal next step following graduation is generating an income to make a comfortable living. However, the phase between graduating and finding employment might be different than you hoped and anticipated. Having realistic expectations will support you through the adjustment of this new phase in your life. For the time being, it may mean you need to move back home or do odd jobs to survive financially while applying for jobs within your field. Some say it is easier to get employed if you are employed – so look out for that part-time job that can make you more employable. You were a senior at university, but now you probably need to start at the bottom and work your way up. Do not lose hope, but persevere; the reward at the end is worth it.

High IQ vs EQ

Being a top achiever at university is a significant accomplishment and something to be proud of. Still, employment criteria have evolved a great deal. Employers are placing more emphasis on the importance of high emotional intelligence (EQ). Being accepted to a university and completing your qualification, is evidence that you have the cognitive ability to perform. A high EQ, however, is being valued as it assists employers in predicting how well the person they are hiring will cope with the many demands of the world of work. An individual with a higher EQ will have healthier relationships with colleagues; deal with conflict better; efficiently express their expectations, needs and frustrations; will not self- or other sabotage; have increased flexibility, and nurture a positive atmosphere within the office environment. Read more [here](#) if you are interested and want to be proactive in improving your EQ in the workplace.

Quote by Rakesh N: “Be positive, principled, proactive, and productive.”

Autonomy and Smart Decision-Making

If you are fortunate enough to find employment, this comes with a new level of responsibility. Autonomy and the ability to independently make decisions in your life is a freeing experience. Some decisions might be accompanied by anxiety, while others with much excitement. The importance here is to make well thought-through decisions. List the pros and cons. How would a decision affect your quality of life in the near future, as well as five years from now? Request input from experienced others around you. Listening does not mean you need to take their advice, but it will help you make an informed decision. Gather information, consider all options and make the best decision to benefit your future.

Learn from Experience

Your mindset and behaviour during challenging times are crucial. You may feel lonely or lost; not be invited to a job interview for which you applied; experience financial difficulties, or feel unstable in life. However, there is always something valuable to take away from these life experiences. Reflect by asking yourself what you did well to help you cope and persevere, and where you can improve? Appreciate the small things. Don't be discouraged or give up. Many people struggled at the beginning of their journey; however, they are now more successful than they could ever have imagined. Here are two real-life inspiring stories of how perseverance paid off: [“Famous failures before success”](#) and [“From failure to success”](#).

Quote by Allen Greene:

“Learn to hear feedback and never let it fester. Instead, consider it, take what works, and move on.”

The aftermath of graduating university may be one with many disappointments, adjustments and frustrations. And that's okay. Keep reminding yourself of your worth and that you have successfully made it this far. There will always be hurdles on your path to success; however, the way you deal with them will be an enormous learning school. Wishing you luck and success, and may you flourish with this new chapter in your life!

Quote by Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.:

“A mind that is stretched by new experiences can never go back to its old dimensions.”