

Fresh Graduate's Bible

22 things you need to know about life after graduation

by Marcella Purnama. 2015.

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Before we begin...

During my first year of work, I quit two full-time jobs. I graduated with high hopes and dreams that working would be the cure I seek – somehow, it is my ticket towards the adult world.

It's not.

After writing my story on the book [Swimming with The Sharks](#), I begin to think, why stop there?

In this guide I share the important lessons I've learned as a fresh graduate. While they are not easy food to chew on, in retrospect I am glad they happened. I just wish I knew them before.

Perhaps **it's not too late for you.**

Part 1: Welcome to the real world

#01

Choose. Everything starts with this: a choice. Should you do a master's degree or should you work? Should you work or open a business? Should you open a business or help your parents'? Should you stay or go back home for good?

You know, we all make difficult choices in life. The hard part is to live with them.

Choose. Even when it turns out to be wrong.

Take heart to choose once again.

#02

When you think your life is crap, well, you are not looking at the bigger picture.

Just remember that everyone else is facing a harder battle, and being jobless or having a so-so job might be the dream of a young man who is forced to bring home the bacon because his father just died.

Widen your horizon.

#03

In the movie *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, there's a line that says,

'Beautiful things don't ask for attention.'

So sad but true, we are not the centre of the universe. We always think we are, but actually, we aren't.

Stop acting like the world owes you a living.

#04

Throw away that microwave mentality.

Life isn't some wish-granting factory (yes, I borrow that from John Green). Remember, the world doesn't owe you a living, nor a dream realised. You have to work for it. You have to work hard to get it. You need to key in the hours.

No success happens overnight, and even if there are many ways to Rome, there's no shortcut.

#05

The more you know, the more you realise how much you actually don't.

So get to know more things.

Learn a new language.

Immerse yourself in a foreign culture.

They would humble you.

Part 2: The things you don't know...
Yet.

#06

Talking about passion is overrated, yet sometimes it feels like we haven't talked about it *enough*. Why? Because there isn't enough action. So let me say this once again: **find it**.

Find the one, two or three things that fuel you. That move you. Find your calling. Follow the breadcrumbs. Trust your gut feeling.

For when you have passion, you have the energy to devote yourself
to an art.

#07

You are not your work.

You may be the new kid on the block and by the firm's standard, you may be doing crappy job. But hey, you are not your work.

Your work is always an extension of you, yet never you.

So the next time your boss criticises you and demands a revision for the umpteenth time, just remember to take it with a grain of salt.

#08

You are not your mistakes.

They don't define you.

Yes, you have made heaps of them – and believe me, you'll keep making them. It doesn't matter if you intend to make one, or try your best not to make one. You'll make mistakes. So the sooner you make peace with your past, the better.

Sometimes, the one person who can't forgive your mistakes is
yourself.

#09

You are not the exception, you are the rule.

You don't drop out of college and suddenly become a billionaire (unless you're Mark Zuckerberg and you're reading this). You may not achieve success straightaway, and that's okay.

The journey may be even better, if you let it be.

#10

No neighbour's grass is greener.

If it is, well, you are spending too much time looking at other people's lives. Life is not a competition. It's never about finishing first or last.

It's about living the good life.

#11

You don't pass or fail as a human.

There's no score, no grade, no ratings in life.

Don't listen to those who tell you otherwise.

Don't listen to the world who whispers that you're a failure.

Because you never are unless you believe it.

#12

We always think in the terms of 'if only' and 'what if'. I come to realise that they don't add a single value to our lives.

For we would never know what could have been.

But what will be is a different story entirely.

Part 3: To my fellow fresh graduates

#13

Find the joy in living an ordinary life.

We always crave the next best thing,
the next promotion,
the next big break.

But by rushing to live tomorrow,
we will always miss the present.

Life, really, is built more by the small moments.

#14

There's a reason why *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* is one of my favourite movies.

Mainly, it's because of this quote:

**'I hope you live a life
you're proud of.
If you find that you're not,
I hope you have the courage
to start all over again.'**

#15

Be lost. Be lost in the sea of strangers.

Be lost in life. Be lost in choices and decisions.

Be lost in two ways. Be lost in a hundred ways.

Be lost in trying to find who you are.

Be lost in trying to be who you are.

**Because coming back to one's feet starts with accepting that we
are indeed, lost.**

#16

Believe.

Believe in the goodness of others.

Believe in the kindness of a stranger.

Believe in the helping hand of a friend.

Believe in hope.

Believe in a better tomorrow.

And most of all, always, always believe in yourself.

#17

For the longest time, I have always been obsessed with finding a piece of myself in others' success stories.

But here's the secret:

**Your beginning and your life stories
will always be different.**

Stop comparing your life to theirs.

#18

Find the joy in travelling to lose yourself.

To find yourself.

To fall in love.

To let yourself be vulnerable.

To get out of your comfort zone.

By travelling, you'll meet more people.

You'll see more wonders.

And you'll grow.

#19

It's not a matter of starting right.

People think that if you are not beginning with a good job and a fat paycheck, your career will be destroyed.

That's a lie.

Truth is, what matters most is just to start. Start something. Anything. Draw that picture. Write that book. Create that business. **Start.**

#20

You are not alone.

It's a nice thing to feel that we are special, it may be a nicer thing to know that what we're going through is universal. You feel lost and tired, and you wonder where on earth you could fit in.

I want to tell you, you are not alone.

No one ever says this out loud. No one ever shares to you their anxiety and fear. But that doesn't mean they don't have one. If you pay extra attention, you'll notice that we are all, after all, simply humans.

#21

J.R.R. Tolkien really knows best when he wrote,

'Not all who wander are lost.'

You may try a handful of things before you find your calling. You may take a few wrong turns before finding the place you belong. But through all this wandering, you are not lost forever.

One day, you'll find yourself again. Promise.

#22

A wise friend once wrote,

'There's a silver lining in everything we do.

Even if I can't see it, I choose to believe it.'

All these things – all your problems and confusing phases in life – they would all become dots that one day connect.

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About the author

Hi there,

My name's Marcella Purnama, and I'm the author of [*Swimming with The Sharks*](#).

I grew up in Jakarta and then went to Melbourne to study Bachelor of Arts. After graduating in 2012, I have worked both at nonprofit and corporate settings as a content writer.

I love coffee, books, and movies, and read just enough fantasy books to believe in magic.

Read more at MarcellaPurnama.com/about.

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Believe.