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What College Grads Can Learn from Putting Their Phones Down

[Janet Foutty](#)

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Today's answer to the question, "What advice do you have for college graduates entering the workforce?" is written by Janet Foutty, chairman and CEO of Deloitte Consulting.

I love graduations. I've walked in several, watched from the sidelines for many more, and recently gave a commencement address at my alma mater. I admit that my favorite part is when a speaker shares real-world advice—actual guidance for those entering the workforce. Here are a few of my treasured morsels of advice that I like to share:

Put the phone down

I must remind myself (and my kids) that we don't need to document every moment with a status update, photo, or tweet. Life is so much more interesting and fulfilling for those who pay attention to what's going on around them. Be aware of how you are interacting with people, especially your family, friends, clients, and colleagues. Demonstrate that your attention and focus is squarely on them in a conversation. This creates an environment of respect and clearly demonstrates that you are interested in what they have to say.

Don't rush your emails

Be thoughtful in your communications. When that especially irritating email shows up in your inbox, consider the other person's situation and viewpoint. A hastily composed email can make a bad situation worse. Take your time crafting your response and read it over twice. Then walk away for a few minutes. When you come back, read it again. If it is what you wanted to say, but not conveyed in the most professional way possible, consider rewriting it.

When life hands you lemons, accept the lemons

Your attitude is everything. Learning from your mistakes is so much a part of growth and success for companies that many leaders have adopted the "fail fast" mantra. This encourages people to take (well-reasoned) bold moves that can pay off either with an innovative product or a lesson learned for the individual and team that will help inform future decisions and direction. Failure *can* be an option if it leads to learning.

Get moving

My rule for using the stairs is four down, three up: If I'm going down four floors or less or going up three floors or less, I don't take the elevator. This is part of my broader plan to sneak exercise into my day wherever I can. I truly believe that

exercise, fresh air, and getting away from electronic devices for a moment to think and move are essential to success.

Data is great—but not everything

I personally love data and can't help but use it to guide much of what I do daily. But at the same time, numbers don't always tell the entire story. They can be misinterpreted or worse, not take into account human nature or experience. So make sure that if you're using statistics, consider the data source, analyze the numbers, and don't let them overrule context, good judgment, and common sense. Lastly, be proud of what you've accomplished so far in your career. Share the benefits of that accomplishment by supporting others on their own professional journeys.