



DEALING WITH GRADUATION

You're a graduating senior and while you're feeling exhilarated and finally liberated, maybe you're also feeling a little confused and uneasy. You've made it through college, so why should you be having ambivalent feelings about graduation.

Don't panic, it's O.K., it's even normal to feel that way. Graduation is a landmark in your life, but one that also carries the burden of important decisions. Making major decisions makes most of us nervous, and rightly so.

But along with these decisions come concerns about separation, readjustment, and new directions. These concerns can seem overwhelming, so it may be useful to look at some of them here.

Separation from old friends, familiar places, and changes in usual routines are some of the things that come to mind when we think of graduation. Nostalgia seeps in and, perhaps, a fear of change.

But separating from old friends does not have to mean losing them. Sometimes we fear change because we don't feel self-confident enough to know how to handle it. Familiar ways of doing things are comforting and new things hold uncertainty. But then again the new holds promise of even better things.

Just as we gain new freedoms and added responsibilities when we make the transition from high school to college, we can expect the same upon graduation from college. But while we have more freedom of choice, it is still limited as ultimately we have to conform to the rules and demands of the institution.

But after college there are no more term papers, no more fraternities and sororities, and, hopefully, Mom won't be checking to see if we did our laundry this week. Wonderful! Now the consequences of our actions will be our own responsibility.

That's a little scary but it's not bad. It means that while we have more control over what we do, we need to be more thoughtful and thorough in making these decisions for ourselves.

Maybe you find it hard to motivate yourself as graduation draws near. Maybe you lack direction in your life. When you started out in college at least your objective was clear-graduate!

Now, life after graduation is going to be different but also, in part, the same because you're still the same person who is successfully graduating. During your college years you've discovered a lot about yourself, your strengths and your interests. Use what you've learned about yourself, pursue your interests and set realistic goals.

It is also important to remember that graduating from college does not mean you are expected to know everything about life or be instantly competent at work. You're fresh out of college and cannot be expected to be experienced or immediately efficient. It's all right to ask for help or suggestions from family or friends about things like apartment or job hunting.

Indeed, tackling all these concerns at once can be intimidating. So, why not take them one step at a time? How did you survive your freshman year? How did you survive your first day in school in first grade? So, whether you're going to be working, attending graduate school, or traveling around Europe, solve your new problems as they come. Who knows, you might even enjoy the challenge!