



# Growth spurts and Graduations

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The spring is the time of year when high school seniors graduate from high school and college students graduate from college. Here is a brief message for graduating seniors that I hope you'll find interesting and perhaps a message you can pass on to those graduating in your own family and circle of influence.

Dear Graduating Seniors,

It is a distant memory for you now, but when you left middle school and started high school, you were growing at a rapid pace. It was during those years that your relatives told you at the end of each summer that you must have grown at least three inches. Your growth spurt was a physical one.

In your high school years, you kept growing physically, but more importantly you grew mentally. You learned how to study and take tests. You learned the true value of friendships and all the joy as well as frustrations that went along with them. You discovered social groups and how to fit into them, or how not to fit into them. You discovered the power of peer pressure and how rewarding or painful it can be when you follow the footsteps of others. Your growth spurt was primarily a social one.

When you leave high school, you enter another growth period. You take control of your own life and leave the daily persuasions of many people who have been so influential to you. You leave the peer pressure of your friends in high school. You leave the encouragements as well as the naggings of your family. You transition from the pressure of having to follow others to being a leader of yourself. You become an adult and decide for yourself what you want to do, when you want to do it, and how you will do it. You receive the right to vote and make decisions for yourself. It is the beginning of the independence that you will enjoy for the rest of your life and one of the most exciting times of your life.

When you go off to college, you continue developing relationships and growing socially, but your growth in knowledge becomes your most noticeable growth spurt. Your college years are where you learn the domain of your future career. You learn fundamentals that prepare you to enter the workforce and earn a good income. You build an understanding of how to perform as an engineer, accountant, manager, doctor, teacher, or whatever role you pursue. You gain valuable knowledge that you will use for the rest of your life.

Whether graduating from high school or college, let your knowledge growth spurt continue. Don't stop learning. The next ten years or so are your most important learning years. You will join the workforce, but consider that learning is more important than earning. The investment in learning you make early in your life will pay financial dividends the rest of your life. The more experience and knowledge you have, the more your future employers will value you. As you make the inevitable choices ahead between learning and earning, choose learning. Gain as much experience and knowledge as you can. It will be returned to you with interest as you move into your next growth spurt – your financial one.

Congratulations seniors!

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Article written by Mike Hawkins, award-winning author of *Activating Your Ambition: A Guide to Coaching the Best Out of Yourself and Others* ([www.activatingyourambition.com](http://www.activatingyourambition.com)), and president of Alpine Link Corp ([www.alpinelink.com](http://www.alpinelink.com)), a boutique consulting firm specializing in leadership development and sales performance improvement.

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