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## Yo, grads, it's time for a little inspirational chat

2005-06-17

Greetings, graduates of the Class of 2005. It's time for my annual commencement speech, a stirring tradition dating all the way back to, uhh, last year.

I promise to keep this year's version shorter, having learned from my inaugural effort. That chat was well received by parents, many of whom wrote appreciative responses.

But since I heard nary a word from an actual graduating senior, I have no choice but to acknowledge that either young people don't read the newspaper, I insulted their intelligence or I didn't include enough smiley-faced logos to keep their attention.

That's the hard part about communicating with you kids these days. Not all of us oldsters are tuned in to the Instant-Messaging generation. IM jargon revolves around finding ways to abbreviate every possible word in order to speed the typing process.

For instance, you might write, ``NP (LOL) BRB," whereas I get paid to fill an entire newspaper column with words each day and thus have absolutely no desire to create more work for myself by abbreviating anything.

You'll pick up on this art of stre-e-e-tching work in order to justify your



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existence as soon as you join the work force.

Which reminds me: Mailing out graduation announcements and then waiting for people to send cash back does not constitute a summer job. It's time to apply yourselves.

No Hummers for you

By that, I mean actually applying for employment opportunities. This involves putting together a zresume and going to various workplaces in search of openings.

This just in: You are not LeBron James. You will not be drafted by a professional sports organization and awarded a multi-million dollar contract at the age of 18. On the upside, you also won't have to move to Cleveland.

No, the world is your oyster. I don't know exactly what that means, but like I said before, I've got to fill this column one way or the other, so bear with me. I think what it means is you'll probably be living with your parents, stuck in their shell, until they shuck you aside at age 25 when they realize they need your bedroom to create a home office.

Unless you're lucky enough to be headed off to college somewhere, in which case you're steering toward a span of life in which your head will be crammed with enough useless knowledge to get you to another graduation speech in, oh, five or six years.

At that point, you'll be no closer to actually having a job, but you will be nearer that magical age of 25 when your parents will toss you out on the street if you attempt to move back home.

A sporting chance

If you were a high school athlete, your sporting days are most likely over. The odds of receiving a college athletic scholarship are roughly the same as those of Ichiro going hitless the remainder of the season.

That, of course, didn't keep your parents from hoping and praying and enrolling you in every sports camp from Bellingham to Butte, Mont., in an effort to build your skills and eventually catch the eye of a big-time coach.

If you want to be cruel, sit down with your folks sometime and add up how much they spent on transportation, equipment, fees, camps and clubs involving your sporting pursuits over the past dozen years. Then show them how they could have paid for the first two years of your schooling themselves



if they'd just put that money in a coffee can and buried it in the back yard.

But that ignores, of course, the myriad of memories you've accumulated. Memories that ultimately will be blurred by the passing years until all you recall is that one time you missed the open layin on a breakaway and felt so embarrassed you wanted to crawl into a hole and never be seen again.

Yeah, that's the cruel joke of the mind. Ultimately the things we remember most are the things we'd most like to forget.

Not that there aren't lessons to be learned from sports. Even if you didn't have the best coaches in the world, don't see that as a negative.

If your coach yelled and screamed and generally acted like an ass, for instance, hopefully you learned that yelling and screaming and ass-acting are not good methods of communication.

Your turn next

I'll let you in on a little secret, now that you're headed into adulthood. Parents and other grownups aren't always right. We don't always send the right message or act the proper way when pressure is on.

Truth be told, it's probably a 50-50 proposition. In other words, you would have turned out just as well had you been raised by a silver dollar.

But since adults have demanded to be part of your educational process, remember what you learned from them. And then do the opposite, when your turn arises.

OK, I promised to be brief, while still filling my daily word quota and earning my paycheck. So here we are at the point where I pull out the memorable quote from one of life's true scholars and send you out into the world with an emotional pat on the back.

I'll go with the words of old comedian Joe E. Lewis, who said, ``You only live once. But if you do it right, once is enough."''

OK. TTYL.

Greg Johns can be reached at [gjohns@juno.com](mailto:gjohns@juno.com). Readers as unfamiliar as his editors are with IM abbreviations can visit [www.netlingo.com](http://www.netlingo.com) for enlightenment



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