**The Lesson I Have Learned**

Having the opportunity to experience many things in my life, I feel it is important to stop and take an inventory along the way in order keep myself grounded and focused on the things that I feel truly matter. While I can only draw from my own experiences, the following are lessons I have learned that have helped me a great deal. On the surface, these may seem obvious and easy, however I can assure you, in my case, they are very difficult to apply consistently but please remember *it is about progress not perfection.*

**Find a mentor**: Having mentors at key stages of my life has made an immeasurable amount of positive difference in for me. Mentors can come in various forms, family friends, teachers, coaches or someone else that you trust. The one thing each of my mentors had in common is they had walked the path ahead of me and been willing to share honestly about their experiences, which has allowed me to form my own opinions. *Do not try to imitate your mentor, simply learn from them as you are unique and it is vital to develop your own identity.* Mentors are everywhere but can often not seem obvious so always be open and willing to look for someone remembering they may not always appear as you think they should. Never be afraid to ask someone to be a mentor.

**Be a continuous learner:** Never stop learning and accepting new challenges but, most importantly, accept the fact you **will** fail in certain areas. Many of the greatest lessons I have learned the most from have been from failing and in a very big way. Each time I have failed, it was due to not being willing to accept help. Keep an open mind and be willing to accept the opinions and insights of others. Resisting change will result in separating you from your others and shutting off any opportunity for growth. *Do not limit yourself by not looking beyond your current situation.*

**Take your own path in life:** It took me a long timetoget over the idea that I did not need approval to make a decision or look for praise when I did. You must be willing to do what you think is best for you even if someone else may not like it. For important issues such as your career, relationships, and goals, it is very important to get advice. However, in the end, it is your view that counts. You will never be happy following someone else’s plan for your life. Finally, it is important to remember not to make yourself the center of the universe. By getting over that shortcoming, I have been able to help others and in doing so, learned a great deal more while achieving greater personal and professional success than I ever felt possible.

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