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Things I Wish I Would Have Known Before I Went Into the Real World

Life is worth living no matter how expensive or painful the lessons I have had to learn have been.

by **Chris Widener**

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I must confess, I laughed when I saw that Maria Shriver has come out with a book called, *"Ten Things I Wish I Had Known Before Going Into The Real World."* The real world? Come on, she grew up a Kennedy and married the biggest action movie star of all time! That aside, it got me to thinking: What are ten things I wish I would have known before going out into the real world? So, here they are...

Life isn't fair. You know, your mother always told you this but as kids we never believe it. We think that somehow mom was two tacos short of a combo plate and that eventually we will go into the real world and show her how those who work hard and do right always do come out on top. Then after about five years we become disenchanted and start to smell the coffee. Life isn't fair! Why didn't anybody tell me that? I guess they did, didn't they? Unfortunately, sometimes the bad guys wins. Sometimes people die early. We shouldn't take this lightly, but we must be realists.

While we accept what comes our way, we still strive to work hard, dream big, and do right.

People play favorites. It is true that it isn't what you know but who you know that counts. This is because people play favorites. Sometimes it doesn't matter that you are the best person or have the lowest bid. People will regularly cut deals with people they like or who can scratch their back in return. I guess the lesson to learn is that while we strive to

achieve much and have excellent skills, we should also develop a strong network of healthy relationships.

People will let you down. Being a person who does what he says can be a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing because I am able to look at myself in the mirror each day. It is a curse because if you are like that, you will most likely expect that from others and yet they will regularly let you down. People can be bad at keeping their word or doing what is right. I could have relieved a lot of emotional stress if I would have known this one before getting out into the real world.

Not everybody wants to grow personally. I just assumed that everybody loved to learn and to grow. I thought everybody wanted to get better at what they did. The reality is, however, that most people do not. That is why there is something that we call "average." Most people want to stay where they are. That is why they do.

> **Those who strive to go forward will always be cutting against the grain and will often be resented, even if quietly, for it.**

The stock market goes down sometimes. Some of you older folks knew this. But us young whippersnappers, we have been riding it high on the hog for a while. This is good in a sense, but unless you have some common sense of how financial markets work, you can get quite a shock from time to time. You see, before you get into the real world, everything gets handed to you and you really don't have to work for much. Then you do and you think that every investment will turn out grand - whoops!

The older you get, the harder it is to lose weight. I was always a little "pudgy." Nothing big, just not like the cover guys of Men's Health Magazine (You know, the ones that say "Six-pack abs in 20 minutes a day." I think that means they only eat twenty minutes a day, and it is usually stewed vegetables! But I digress...). If I would have known better, I would have worked harder when I was younger to keep the weight off so I wouldn't have to work that much harder now!

Marriage is work. A good marriage is more work. When you are young you think, "I'll find the girl of my dreams and we'll live happily ever after." Well, hello! You forget that your spouse is human and you are too, most

of the time! To live under the same roof with someone and to work out likes and dislikes, personalities, and schedules, not to mention life goals and the like is HARD WORK! Not drudgery, just work. Yes, there will be plenty of bliss and joy, but marriage will make you work for it!

It takes longer to get out of debt than to get into it. I have never really had much debt. I did take out student loans to pay for school and wow, do they take a long time to get out of. Fortunately I have them paid off but for a while there, it was one of the big checks we wrote every month. Many people think credit cards are great because they can have what they want when they want it. Too bad they don't realize that twenty minutes of shopping ecstasy will result in months or years of payments.

It doesn't work to try to please others. I have always wanted people to like me. Many times, I wanted them to like me too much. That isn't good. This doesn't work because I realized that most of the time, people liking or disliking you has nothing to do whatsoever with rational thought. Some people will dislike you, no matter how well you have done, and others will love you, warts and all. So I do my best and let the chips fall where they may - now.

You need to tend to your spiritual, emotional, and physical health or you will crash hard. If you don't take time for yourself, both inwardly and outwardly, your body will catch up with you. You can take time for yourself by choice or not. It is much more fun by choice! Life is hard and it can and will weigh you down.

> **We need to tend the fires of spirit and mind while keeping our physical bodies tuned for success as well. If not, our bodies break down.**

Bonus: In spite of the above, life is very much worth it! Some of the above may seem like bummers. They aren't the "positive" things we like to focus on, but they are true. Being positive doesn't mean sticking your head in the ground in order to avoid the negative of life. What it means is that we are realists who understand the negative aspects of life and choose to be optimists instead. We deal with the negative and pursue the positive. That is why I can say that life is worth living no matter how

expensive or painful the lessons I have had to learn have been. Life is good and I can make it better!

So I had to learn some lessons AFTER I got into the real world. So what? At least I learned them and can live the rest of my life to the fullest from now on! I hope you can too!

Chris Widener is an example of how anyone can overcome any odds to achieve a successful life and help others achieve the same. Chris has overcome many obstacles... living through his father dying suddenly when he was four, being sent away from his family to live with relatives at age nine and becoming involved with drugs and alcohol by the age of twelve. Chris overcame those obstacles and has for the last ten years worked with some of the most financially successful families in America, helping them to achieve both personally and professionally. Now he can do the same for you!