

Letter to a Frustrated Graduate

Dear Kareem

If someone hands you a lemon, make some lemonade. You must have learnt in psychology that intelligence is the ability to solve problems. A college degree is like a driver's license. A driver's license shows that you have the minimum skills needed to start your career as a driver. You start driving and gaining experiences after you get your driver's license. Similarly, a college degree shows that you have the minimum requirements to start a job. It is only a beginning, not an end. You start learning and gaining all kinds of experiences after you graduate. This is just the beginning. Your school is different from the college classroom. No matter what they teach you in college, it will not be sufficient to meet even 50% of skills required by the job. Therefore, we have to work on learning the part that college did not teach us. As a matter of fact, to do a job successfully, you do not need a college degree at all, especially in this day and age. Whatever we learn in college becomes obsolete in just few years. What you actually need is a positive attitude, perseverance, and the ability to read specialized books and continue to learn as long as you live.

Instead of crying and cursing the day you got that job, why not turn the situation to your advantage. Why don't you look at it as a learning experience, as a challenge or a puzzle that needs to be solved. If you live in an industrial city, why don't you explore this industrial city. What Americans do when they have to live in our hot desert, they explore the desert, its wild flowers and colorful stones, and when they go home, they write books about desert flowers and jewelry made of the stones they collected. Some paint beautiful desert scenes, some turn them into postcards and sell them. Why don't you read about how children learn and use this knowledge in dealing with your young students. What will you do when you become a father? If you just know a few things about children, part of your problem will be solved. Children do not learn by having them sit quietly in their seats for 45 minutes and by having them listen to and obey what the teacher is telling them to do. They do not learn by listening to explanations and monotonous repetitions. Students in general do not have a photographic memory. Do we, as adults? Children are active little creatures. They like to play. Their attention span is 10-15 minutes. They have a sensory

memory (try to find what it means). They can only perceive tangible things, tangible concepts and experiences. They learn if we have them do, touch, see, smell and taste things. Whatever you teach them, it has to be concrete. Use several short activities. You can fill up the rest of the gaps by reading about educational psychology, child development and language teaching for children. You may use children's songs, games, pictures and realia to teach them English. Do not forget to give them rewards like small toys, candy and colorful balloons. Decorate their classroom with pictures. Have them bring their own crayons, pictures and toys to class and have them learn their names and talk about them.

Finally, I would like you to know that Allah has destined you to teach those little children, because you are the best one to do it. Teaching small children is better than doing nothing at all. Working in the desert is better than living in a haven with no job at all and plenty of free time. Living in the desert is better than living in a big city like Baghdad or Gaza, or being sick with one of those diseases. You can turn this desert into a haven if you want to, if you try, and if you start learning afresh. You need this kind of job to develop the necessary stamina that you need for your next job.

Wishing you the best of luck and looking forward to hearing from you and hearing about your adventures with those adorable children.