Ryan’s Question: Would you change anything about how you prepared for college, anything from the college application process to orientation to expectations you had in your head?

Amberly’s Answer: A lot of tours have been passing through South College lately, as high school juniors (like you, of course…) start to consider colleges and high school seniors start to narrow down to their final college decision, so I figured now was a more appropriate time than ever to answer this question.

The short answer to this question is yes, I would. I would change a lot of the things I did, starting in middle school. Because even then, back when I was 11 or 13, I would be angsting and stressing already over that math test that had felt so important at the time but didn’t actually matter in the long run. A lot of stuff that felt really high pressured in the past actually doesn’t mean a whole lot of anything now that I’m in the future.

So that’s the biggest thing I would change, caring so much about every little tiny thing. Because I feel like I was caught up in all those school-related things that felt so important at the time but weren’t, and it gave me a lot of stress that I really didn’t need.

Like, would it have really hurt me if I didn’t know the Pythagorean Theorem? Probably not. Meanwhile, there are multiple types of health insurance, and I nearly didn’t get the antibiotics I needed for my nasty case of strep throat because I just didn’t know that pharmacy insurance was different from general insurance and tried to give the wrong insurance card.
Nearly every teacher you’ll have will tell you that their class is going to be the most important class that you’ll ever take. And yes, keeping up your grades is important. But DS, as lovely as it can be, is a bubble. Whenever you get that not-the-best grade on your test or not get into one out of ten to twenty colleges you applied to, just take a deep breath.

Because after all, there will be other tests to conquer and other colleges to give you a plethora of opportunities. The world is so much bigger than it seems. And while you may not quite realize that just yet — I didn’t really grasp the concept until I came to college this year — it’s true.

Don’t waste all your time and energy trying to fit into one classic life model if it simply doesn’t work for you. Because as easy as it can be for society to fit people into this model and the boxes within it, people can vary greatly. Not everyone goes to college when they’re 18 and dewy-eyed, or go for a full four years. Not everyone goes to college at all, either because they can’t afford to or they don’t want to.

And, again, a part of me had kind of known that going into college, but also a part of me really hadn’t. When you’re not exposed to any other options — any other thriving, flourishing options — it’s hard to picture those as actual alternatives.

Alright. So, Mom might get really upset at me for planting this idea in your head, but I feel like as someone who’s constantly stressed and anxious, this would’ve been really useful information to have been taught (as well as the fact that there are multiple health insurances — yes, I am still going on about that). The point is, you don’t have to put all this stress and emphasis on college and school. Neither is the end all, be all. Things will work out. If you apply to ten schools, chances are you’ll at least get into one. Fail a test, there’s always another one to counterbalance it later.

After all, you’re a junior in high school — the most you should be worrying about is being the best severed head you can be for Pippin next weekend. Which I’m sure you’ll absolutely rock!

Blog Column:
Amberly’s Answers

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