

THE NISOD PAPERS

An occasional publication dedicated to topics of interest to community and technical college educators.



PRIDE: Five Choices for Your Success

Dear Student:

Each semester you will face opportunities and challenges on your journey towards your goals. Remember that goal setting is easy; goal achievement takes consistent effort and evaluation. In addition to the course content you need to master, you will have a better chance of success in school, work, relationships, and life in general when you practice the five specific choices that are part of my PRIDE—Purpose, Resources, Integrity, Discipline, and Equilibrium—Model for Success. So, as you plan your journey and take action to reach your dreams, consider doing so with PRIDE.

PURPOSE

Know your direction and motivation. What is it that drives you? Why do you put your feet on the floor each morning? Why did you decide to come to college? What dreams do you have? While long-term goals can be quite motivating, they can be rather intimidating as well. In our instantaneous-communication-I-want-it-now-world, long-term goals lack immediacy—and can be daunting. Don't sabotage yourself with shortcuts. Evaluate your goals and the steps you must take to make them realities. Ask yourself, "Does my 'why' connect to who I am as a person?"

Quick exercise. Are you building a transcript or a life? Einstein reportedly said, "Education is not the learning of facts. It's rather the training of the mind to think." Memorizing facts for your test might get you an "A"—but what's the bigger issue here? You are more than your GPA. Yes, grades can have an impact on financial aid and program acceptance, but keep it all in balance—and know why you are doing what you are doing. A mentor, instructor, or coach can help. (See Resources below.)

RESOURCES

Know what resources you have available at your disposal. Think of the times you may have struggled in school or in life beyond campus. Even the seasoned songwriter and author hits the wall and comes up dry from time-to-time. The prolific salesperson experiences a slump. And the straight-A student will eventually run into her toughest professor ever! Whether you need counseling, mentoring, coaching, or financial assistance, your college provides valuable resources designed to help you be successful. You have to do two things, however: Know about the resources and then use them.

Quick exercise: Consider the CAP Principle. By the end of the second week (at the latest) of the school term, you want to have begun developing a meaningful and authentic relationship with at least one Classmate, one Adviser, and one Professor. It's your responsibility to build healthy connections and support networks.

INTEGRITY

Know that you are acting with honesty, respectfulness, and responsibility. It's obvious (isn't it?) that we should treat *one another* with integrity (trust, honesty, and respect). In addition, it should be just as obvious that we need to treat *ourselves* with integrity. Integrity means to do what is in alignment with our core values. Author Parker Palmer reminds us that when, "The work we do lacks integrity for us, then we, the work, and the people we do it with will suffer." Do your goals align with your core values—i.e., with who you are as a person? (See Purpose above.)

Quick exercise. List five priorities (people, things, issues, places, or causes) that you hold as most important in your life. Then list the five things that take most of your time each week (not counting sleep). Compare your lists. Do they connect or does a gap exist between the life you *say* you are living and the life you actually *do* live? The *values* list represents the story you tell yourself about your life. The *time* list stands for the story you live each week. If you need help to sort this out, contact one of the Resources listed above.

DISCIPLINE

Know what you need to do and take the initiative to take care of your priorities. If you are responsible, then you are accountable for your actions. You have to answer for what you do. Author Annie Dillard said, “The way we spend our days is the way we spend our lives.” How true. Build habits that lead you toward your dreams; avoid those behaviors that move you further from your dreams. (See Integrity above.)

Quick exercise. At the end of each day, ask yourself three questions that relate to your journey toward your dreams: What should I stop doing? What should I keep doing? What should I start doing? Answer honestly and then take responsible action to move closer to your goals. (See Purpose above.) Ambition and potential are great, but without initiative they will not get you very far. A mentor, coach, or instructor might be able to help. (See Resources above.)

EQUILIBRIUM

Know how to strive for balance and well-being in your life. While this can be difficult, it remains vitally important. If you don’t take care of yourself, if you don’t maintain a sense of balance, how will you be able to reach your goals? (See Purpose and Integrity above.) We all live multidimensional lives. We are not “just a student” or “just a teacher” or “just a “[you fill in the blank].” While labels might differ, we essentially have six life dimensions: social, occupational, spiritual, physical, intellectual, and emotional. Whether you call it resilience, passion, or grit, you have to keep your dimensional strings in tune.

Quick hit exercise. When one dimension is out of tune, it will affect the others. When this happens, you need to hit the reset button. For instance, pay attention to your diet, exercise, *and* sleep patterns (physical dimension). If you are physically exhausted, it becomes increasingly difficult to make clear and beneficial decisions (emotional dimension). Your sleep-deprived self might be more apt to “snap” at a friend, family member, or colleague (social and occupational dimensions). Self-care is essential if you want to move toward your goal. (See Integrity and Purpose above.) Seek out campus resources as needed.

PRIDE represents a call for action. These five choices reflect pride in your goals and pride in your life. Best wishes for continued success as you move toward your dreams. Act with **PRIDE** on your journey.

Steve Piscitelli, Professor (retired), Social and Behavioral Science/Student Success

For more information, resources, and strategies, contact the author at steve@stevepiscitelli.com or visit www.stevepiscitelli.com.