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KEEPING COOL & STAYING FOCUSED

Motivational Advice for HBCU Students

Modern American students are attending school during one of the toughest and unpredictable times in United-States history. The COVID-19 pandemic abruptly entered our lives and changed every aspect of them. For students, this meant two things: going from learning in a classroom to learning through a computer screen, and not being able to participate in the campus experience.

Both of these were huge blows to students, especially for those at HBCUs because a huge part of our culture is building community through social interactions. Not only that, but as a side effect of the pandemic, the country is going through another economic recession that is comparable to

the recession caused by the 2008 housing crisis. As I was finishing my last year in undergrad, I felt the effects of these events and it was hard finding ways to stay motivated in those last days of my college career.

Now, as a proud HBCU alum, I would like to share the different practices I used to stay motivated not only during the pandemic but throughout my entire time attending an HBCU.

The first practice I would like to mention is journaling. I know at first it may seem like a silly activity for elementary school students (that's what I thought too), but journaling can be useful for sorting through your thoughts. It is a great way to get to know



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yourself better and to track your progress academically, socially, etc. Why do you need to track yourself? Well, as we explore the world, we tend to change depending on what we experience, sometimes without even realizing it.

We become better at certain skills, tasks, and interactions that we used to have barely any proficiency in. Tracking these mundane yet significant details is important because when we are demotivated, we tend to feel like we aren't making progress in our lives. **CONTINUE>>**



In these moments, looking at past entries can help remind us how far we've come in school and in life. Whether you feel like you're being outperformed by a classmate or doing assignments seems pointless, remember where you started, where you are at now, and where you will be in the future if you keep pushing forward.

An invaluable skill that will help you both in college and in life is communicating and networking with your community. Depending on your situation, utilizing this skill will look different. For those of you who are still in virtual learning, this may be a bit more difficult to practice but it's still possible. If there is a chatbox in your virtual classroom, try talking to your classmates either before or after class.

See if anyone is interested in starting a group chat through text or through an app. If you aren't comfortable with sharing your phone number, then using a GroupMe link is a great alternative. If your school is back in person, use the advice previously mentioned but also plan on going to events that are affiliated with your school.

Meeting people through these avenues is not only a great way to build friendships, but it can also support you in your academics. Let's say you're an English major having trouble in a math class. The professor's explanations aren't making any sense and going to their office hours hasn't been helpful either. When passing the class feels hopeless, you remember that you made a group chat with some of your

classmates at the beginning of the semester. You message the group admitting that you are struggling in the class and you discover that you're not the only one.

In fact, you find out that they are going to have a study group session with one of the students who is acing the class. They explain the subject matter in a way that is understandable to you and your confidence in the class increases each time you all meet.

Always remember, especially when you feel alone in your struggle, that there are hundreds of students who are feeling the same. Try to connect with them and conquer these struggles together instead of in isolation. The last pieces of advice I'll give you are to listen and watch optimistic content and spend time outdoors.



This may sound corny, but I highly recommend listening and watching motivational speeches. You never know what information or tips they may support you for your situation. There are various types of motivational speeches, but I recommend watching TEDx Talks on YouTube because of their diversity of topics.

Two talks I think you should watch are "What should I do with my life?" by Charlie Parker, "Interpersonal Communication in the Future World" by Celine Fitzgerald, and "How to avoid death" by David JP Phillips. As for going outdoors, try doing an activity in a setting that is surrounded by nature. This can include something like hiking or

taking a walk in a park. Being surrounded by nature can have a cleansing effect on the mind and can help realign you with what's important to you and your goals.

Attending an HBCU is a challenging trail, but that just makes conquering it so much sweeter. It is a great honor for us to participate and experience a culture that very few people have the chance to explore. You may not always see it, but your classmates, family, and ancestors are all rooting for you to do your best and to make them proud.

All of these people, including myself, are praying for your success, and we can't wait to see who you become.

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As the tree leaves gradually begin their descent and their colors change from shades of emerald to those of crimson and gold, the spirit of Fall Semester is surely underway! And as the month of October commences, so do our expectations of Homecoming -- the hypest time of the year on any HBCU campus, but since COVID-19 rocked our world and shut down the economy, academic motivation and the joys of the "HBCU Experience" have increasingly declined.

The connected family, that group of students who pleaded to come back to campus via Twitter all summer long, is no longer connected, but distanced. It is almost as if the enforced social distancing of the pandemic subconsciously shifted us into a mode of withdrawal and self-approved isolation. Along with the seemingly unending pains of the whole world, we deal with the internal pains that only we experience; and on the inside, on our historically

Black campuses, we are battling these uncertainties the best we know how. With many campuses closing their doors to visitors and putting a halt to the in-person community aspect so many of us long for, some students are sadly beginning to accept the dismal reality of our times. They care about their health, but on the inside, a bleeding has erupted that demands the attention of their superiors.

"Let us experience what we came here for!" their hearts cry, as email after email comes flooding in about COVID-19 testing sites, health checks, screenings, and distancing requirements. A year has passed, but the damage initially imparted on our nation and community as a people, is far from rectified.

The damage done was not only that of a broken socio-political scene or an out-of-control virus taking the lives of millions in 2020, but also the negative effects of being in isolation for a prolonged period of time, the fear of

uncertainty, and an ever mounting distrust of state and national governments. All of these things have ultimately resulted in a loss of identity for many, as many of the routines and occasions that normally took place, have been long gone and replaced by a fleeting hope for normalcy. This does things to people. This does things to their mental health and their abilities to perform scholastically, physically, and even socially like they once had.

For Black college students in particular, the burden has been especially heavy, as there was not much "stimulus relief" or a break from the fight for our lives, in regards to health and police brutality. For too long, and too many times, we exist fenced in, stressed, and perplexed by the growing pains of Black young-adulthood in an uncertain society. It is time to rest. October has come, and although there may be limiting factors on how we carry out our Homecomings, where we
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take our Fried Chicken Wednesday pictures, and how we will execute our concerts and comedy shows, we still can. It is the mere fact that we can that we must rest assuredly on, and from there, create our own realities.

October is the month of pumpkin spice, Breast Cancer and Domestic Violence Awareness, and World Mental Health Day, as well as a host of many other important dates; however, it is important that we take time to rest and understand the value of it.

In the words of UNCF, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste," but that can easily happen if it isn't taken care of properly. It's more than drugs or alcohol, it's stress, worry, anxiety, hopelessness, and fear that can waste a brilliant mind.

So I encourage everyone to be like the leaves, constantly growing and changing to adapt to life's seasons, but wise enough to know when their descent time has come and that it's a season of rest.

By: Baylee Robertson
Tuskegee University
Class of 2022



FOUR THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN ACCEPTING OR STAYING ON A JOB

Make no mistake about it, to be successful in the Corporate arena (or any workplace arena really) doing your research about the company, industry and their brand will help you make better decisions. It will also be helpful to you after you accept the job offer. This blog addresses things I recommend you keep in mind when you're deciding if you want to join or stay on a job.

1. Learn about the company's culture.

If they have them (not all companies do), locate their company mission and vision statement, their aspirational values and brand statement (how they want others to view them). After you've researched this, dig deeper.

Learn how the company's culture ties into this mission/vision, or perhaps it doesn't. Try to evaluate what a day on the job looks like, and do you fit in? Is this a place that you can work hard, but find joy on a daily basis as well?

2. Do an self-assessment.

How does this job, company, industry serve you? How does it help you move toward your short - and long-term career goals and aspirations?

Even more: does the thought of working on this job, with this company, in this industry make you proud? When people you love and respect, and who love and respect you find out you've accepted this job, will they be proud?

Will you be proud? And if the answer to either is "no," have an honest conversation with yourself. Perhaps get a coach or mentor to help you with what might be your next steps.

3. Are you making a sacrifice or an investment?

When you do your self-assessment, identifying why you may or may not accept the job, list the whys and why nots for each one. How does your decision serve you and help you become your best self? Define success and what that looks like to you over the next

1-5 years. Outline positive impacts you want to make. Remember organizations work as a team, so being a quality team player will be important. Someone is always watching, so do not let your guard down in written or verbal communication.

Make sure anything you say or write (particularly in email) you would be okay if the Senior VP was to read it aloud to 10,000 people. In the end are you sacrificing your time, thoughts, and beliefs, or are you investing your time, beliefs, and skills to get to your next destination? In many cases there's nothing wrong with either, but it's important you know the difference.

4. Do A Wellness Review.

Just like your body or car needs to be cared for, analyze what's working with your job and your life. Identify what needs to be tuned up or needs to be altered, replaced or released. This can be done quarterly, annually, or after something major occurs in your life. Just remember to always make time to assess your situation, so that you can be great on any position you select, and always live your best life as well.

By: Glo Cotton