

Graduation 2007

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I am a child of the 80s. I was raised near the end of the Cold War. About the time I was a senior at Cascade High School, the movie "Back to the Future Part II" was hitting theatres, the first President Bush was in office, and a group of Chinese students began a series of protests against Communism in Tiananmen Square in Beijing. Little did I know that the Berlin Wall would crumble in just a few short months and, a year later, Iraq would invade Kuwait, leading to the first Gulf War.

Being a child of this era, the idea of sending a letter back in time somehow seems completely plausible to me. So I'm going to take this opportunity to write a letter to the 1989 version of myself in hopes that someone else, maybe even my 10-year-old daughter, will find a glimpse or two of insight in my writing.

Dear Just-about-to-graduate-Wade,

First, let me tell you that, in 2007, you are happily married, healthy, and gainfully employed. You have a lovely daughter and your wife is a knock-out! Now, let me see if I can tell you some helpful things without messing up the space-time continuum.

For starters, the year 2000 does not bring with it space ship cars that fold into your briefcase or domestic robots to clean your house. People still have jobs and mow the lawn, so stop throwing away everything that doesn't involve a computer.

You know how you're too afraid to talk to those elusive, pretty girls? Well, they're just as unsure about themselves as you are about them. Go ahead! Talk to them! In reality, they're generally pretty nice and someday, they will turn into mothers and neighbors you'll see at the grocery store. When you end up bumping into them, you'll be glad you got to know them.

Make sure you marry a woman who shares enough of your interests that you can always find a way to spend a rainy day together. But she should also be different enough that she's forever a mystery.

Stockpile some really great memories of spending time with your grandparents. You never know when Granny will lose her ability to remember "the good old days", or even your name.

Although politics seems pretty complicated now, it's really mostly a game to see who gets to make the rules and who decides how the money's spent.

Make sure you find a career that you genuinely love. As long as you can pay your bills, enjoy your job and feel like you're doing something meaningful, everything else falls into place.

Religion is really about finding a way to understand the connection between you and that which is much larger than you. In actuality you already understand this, but you'll spend the rest of your life forgetting it and remembering it, bit at a time, all over again.

About your friends: Many of the faces you see every day in the halls will soon become nameless, distant memories. Others, however, will stand with you as you're married, be among the first to hold your newborn child and will sit and cry with you when your grandfather dies the day before your 30th birthday.

Never do anything only for money. You'll learn, the hard way, to pay more attention to the feeling in the pit of your stomach and less attention to the thickness of your wallet.

Continue to look after your kid sister. The two of you will need each other more than you ever imagined.

Take care of your body. Feed it mostly healthy food. Find a kind of exercise that you enjoy. It's far too easy to get far too heavy. Oh, and don't get those piercings and tattoos. Believe it or not, there will be a time when you won't want a Dungeons and Dragons tattoo on your chest.

Don't be a good Dad, or even a great Dad--be a phenomenal Dad! Spoil your child and teach her to say her prayers at bedtime. Never speak to her or strike in anger. Any lesson that's truly worth teaching should wait until your temper settles.

Oh, and you know those old Star Wars figurines? Don't throw them out like you're planning. There's this thing that happens in a few years called eBay. Luke Skywalker, Chewbacca and the gang may just become the down payment on that convertible you've had your eye on!

Truly,

A-little-older-and-wiser-Wade