



First things first, I believe in you. I know you've spent the year isolated. You've stood six feet apart from everyone around you, wearing a mask and navigating what seemed so unpredictable during the worst pandemic in a century. But let me tell you: Have faith. You're going to be OK.

At High Point University, I often tell our students that your present circumstances don't determine where you go. They merely determine where you start. So, see this time as a recess to reassess. To start, ask yourself three questions:

- Where have I been?
- Where am I now?
- Where do I want to go?

Write down your answers. What you come up with will help you figure out where you are and where you want to go, who you are and who you want to become. Your answers will represent the goals you want to set in your life, and they will be based on the values and beliefs you hold close. Map your progress and you will find the moral compass of your life.

Your path forward can be confusing, even daunting. You know that. But remember, whatever life throws you, whatever situation you're in, your values and beliefs can point you in the right direction. Think of it as a math equation. Your beliefs lead to your behaviors, and your behaviors lead to your results. If you don't like the results, don't fuss about your behaviors. Examine your beliefs and realign them. When you know what you value and what you believe, you will be laser-focused on the things that matter to you. Those things will anchor your life.

Next, talk to people you trust. Ask them about their life. Hear how they came to be and heed their advice. They can help guide you because they can share the journey they took, not the destination they found. It is one of the most important things you will ever learn. I call it "relational capital." Life is all about connecting with other people and those connections will help you understand the power of two words: influence and impact. Influence is not about power or control. Influence is about collaborating with others, sharing your passion and being trustworthy. When you do that, you build your credibility with others, and the impact you make will affect you and those around you for years to come. That is what makes life beautiful and your existence on this Earth so valuable.

You will have to navigate many unknowns in your life. Don't turn away. Face them. Then, ask yourself three more questions:

- What is the best thing that can happen?
- What is the worst thing that can happen?
- What is the most likely result?

If the most likely result will take you toward where you want to go – and if you're willing to deal with the worst in exchange for what could be the best – take the leap and watch what happens. You will overcome your fear of failure, leave your comfort zone behind and discover a path toward something even more purposeful, more aligned with the passion that excites your life. Fear will sap your passion and doing nothing will get you nowhere. Put yourself out there because no one else will put you out there – but you.

So, do your homework. Ask yourself a handful of questions and look within to see what's in your heart. You'll find what matters to you. Then, follow the advice of my mom. She had a fourth-grade education, a PhD in common sense and a knack for being profound. "Who you spend time with is who you become," she told me. I do believe that.

As you head out of the pandemic, believe in the art of the possible. You have the power to be the architect of your future. Design it well and embrace it with enthusiasm. It will spark your creativity and give you the insight you need to become who you want to be.

Here's to your next step in your life. God bless you on your journey.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nido R. Qubein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent "N" and "Q".

Dr. Nido R. Qubein
President, High Point University