**10 Things I’ve Learned Before My 21st Birthday**

They say that your “golden birthday” is the birthday when you turn the age of the date of your birthday. For me, that would make my 21st birthday my golden birthday because I was born on the 21st of December. Make sense? Anyway, I’ve learned a lot in my 21 years on earth, and although I definitely can’t put all of those down on paper (or list them on the internet), I can definitely share with you a few of the lessons that stand out.

In no particular order, here are 10 things I’ve learned before my 21st birthday:

1. It’s okay what you need to do for yourself sometimes.

As much as you want to, you just can’t do everything, and that’s okay. Sometimes you have to choose yourself over other people and that doesn’t make you selfish – it makes you strong. Finding a healthy balance between tending to your needs and tending to other people’s needs is essential.

1. You shouldn’t let anyone, or anything get in the way of what makes you happy.

Happiness is what everyone on this planet strives for. We all have different things that make us happy and fulfilled, and it’s important to tend to those things no matter what outsiders think. I’ve always been a very independent person, but for others it’s not as easy to move past the opinions of others. In the end, it’s your life and you should do what fulfills you without judgement.

1. Communicate what you want or need, or you may never get it.

People often get frustrated when they don’t get what they want. Of course, not every wish will come true – that’s life and it’s what helps us grow. But it’s important to always ask yourself, how could I potentially fix this or make this situation better? Communication is so important because no one is a mind reader; if you never say what’s on your mind, no one will ever know. If there is something you can do to try and better a situation, you should communicate that because what you have to say is important and you never know how it may help someone else, too.

1. Don’t be afraid to go at your own pace.

We often get so caught up in comparing ourselves to others. It’s such a toxic habit that’s hard to get rid of. But the fact of the matter is that every single person has a unique experience which is what makes life so interesting. If everyone went through life at the same pace, the human experience would be so dull. When you want to compare your life to someone else’s, remind yourself that everyone lives a different life and what’s right for someone else is not always what is right for you at that moment, too.

1. If you’re not sure what you’re doing – you’re not alone.

Even when people seem to have it all together, chances are, they don’t. For those who do – I envy you. It takes time to figure things out, so it’s okay to not have it all together just yet. That’s the beauty of being young. You have so much potential and one day, you’ll figure it out.

1. Write about all of your best days and your worst days.

Keeping a journal of sorts is one of the best things I’ve ever started doing. I’ve learned a lot about myself and love looking back on my favorite memories. A great way to do this is starting a bullet journal, or you can even just jot down quick notes in your notes app. I don’t journal as much as I wish, but I definitely love looking back on the memories I’ve written about and do my best to do it as often as I can.

1. When in doubt, pray.

Not everyone is religious, but I personally find a lot of comfort in confiding in God. Every night I tell him what I’m grateful for that happened that day, and things I’m hoping to accomplish tomorrow. For those who aren’t religious, meditation is also a great way to take a moment to relax or to reflect back on your day.

1. Always make an effort and put in the time.

Time is key to becoming better in many aspects of life. Set aside time to work on yourself as a person. Set aside time to do your schoolwork so you don’t stress yourself out doing it all last minute. Set aside time to build relationships with those who mean the most to you. It’s easier said than done, but if you make the effort to put in time, you can reach your goals in no time.

1. What you’re going through now likely won’t be so significant in a year.

When you’re going through a hard time, it can be hard to look past it. But you should always know that whatever you’re going through now will most likely be very miniscule in a year from now. Keep your head up, and know that things will change down the road.

1. Make sure you always have something to look forward to.

I actively try my hardest to always have something to look forward to. For example, during a dreadful school week I’ll make plans with friends for the weekend or tell myself that if I finish an assignment by a certain time, I’ll get some ice cream later. Even small things that I can look forward to makes going through life much easier because I know there’s a light at the end of the tunnel. Even if you’re going through a great period in your life, it’s still important to have more to look forward to!

All I can say is that time truly FLIES. I can’t wait to learn and grow in my next 21 years and beyond!