

Dear MBA Class of 2011

It is that time of the year when business schools all over the country begin to go through the collective voluntary torture that is campus placements. So if you are in business school right now, I guess things are pretty crazy. Chill.

Around this time annually, I usually get a few emails from students seeking advice. Usually it's career advice— "Should I be doing marketing or banking?"—and sometimes it's advice on alternatives—"I am convinced I have an exciting book, about non-vegetarian cupcakes, inside me. What should I do?" (My answer to both questions is: "banking".)

This year I have decided to encapsulate all the advice I have to give, not all of it useful, into one Cubiclenama piece. That way I save you the hassle of writing to me, and I save myself the agony of cutting and pasting the same email to all of you without screwing up the "Dear Babykutty" bit in the beginning.

However, you know how kids are these days. With their short attention spans and their disregard for old-fashioned things. Hence I have decided to make my advice sexy by delivering it roughly to the tune of Baz Luhrman's popular 1999 single *Wear Sunscreen*. That song was also targeted at young people and gave them life advice.

But my version is tailored for a mature MBA audience. Imagine it as being delivered by Morgan Freeman to a soft hip-hop-ish background beat.

Ladies and gentleman of the MBA class of 2011,

If I could offer you only one tip for the future, a good USB memory stick would be it. The long-term benefits of a USB stick have been proved by the number of times people lose laptops, or are suddenly asked to submit resumes on a plane or at a conference. The rest of my advice has no basis more reliable than my meandering work experience.

Enjoy your last few days in business school. Chances are you've already cynically dismissed the whole bloody place. But trust me, in five years you'll attend an alumni reunion and realize that business school was perhaps the last place you were both truly intellectually challenged and emotionally excited. Both will happen again. But rarely together.

You are not as smart, or stupid, as you think. Don't worry about the future; or worry, but know that worrying is as effective as trying to make investments based on research reports that will, one day, be written by that same clueless idiot sitting next to you in the canteen right now. The real troubles in your life will never be solved by a presentation or

spreadsheet, and will always involve other people. And people are unpredictable sons of bitches.

Spend a little time every day doing nothing.

Listen.

Don't expect organizations to be as committed to you as you are to them. They don't work that way. If you do find one that is as committed, never leave.

Jog. (Or walk briskly, or cycle, or do yoga.)

Don't judge yourself by how much money you make. (And no good comes from knowing who this is.)

Record all the feedback you ever get in your career. Especially the inaccurate, pointless, biased and vague bits that drove you nuts. This will help you when you eventually give feedback to somebody yourself.

Keep a copy of all your old resumes. When you are struck by bouts of existential crisis, flip through them in chronological order. Do the same with resignation letters.

Shave.

Not a lot of people are "meant" to do something. They just say that to sell bad books. Salman Rushdie might make an excellent, and content, supply chain management consultant. Who knows? You will find various amounts of meaning and satisfaction in various things. Choose your compromises wisely.

You'll like the job a little better if you like the dress code.

Take chances when you're young, single and don't have loans to repay. You'll take larger chances. Large chances are more fun than small ones.

Be nice to people for the heck of it.

Maybe you'll retire when you're 45, maybe you won't, maybe you'll get an Awesome Alumnus Award, maybe you won't, maybe you will marry your school sweetheart, maybe you won't. Whatever happens, do not forget those probability lessons they taught you in school. Things tend to even out.

Dance. But keep it classy.

Avoid reading business books. However feel free to write them.

Travel light.

You will most certainly face difficult choices. In most cases it helps to think of what choice maximizes gain, instead of agonizing over what minimizes loss.

Invest in a good suit, pair of shoes and get a shave. Thanks to society's shallowness, the returns will be considerable.

Calm down.

Let people give you advice. Develop the art of looking interested even if you are not. Pay attention to advice from people who have a stake in your happiness, and not a stake in your success.

Please stop listening to Pink Floyd.

But forget everything else. Quickly go buy that USB stick.

Best of luck.

Cubiclenama takes a fortnightly look at the pleasures and perils of corporate life. Your comments are welcome at cubiclenama@livemint.com

To read Sidin Vadukut's previous articles, go to www.livemint.com/cubiclenama