



Living in the Present: Career Lessons from Two University Students

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Each September, when I return to university campuses to begin a new round of career guidance work, it often feels as though I am standing in front of a mirror—one that reflects the courage and struggles of a younger generation as they confront reality. Recently, I met two students whose contrasting stories prompted me to rethink the true meaning of “living in the present.”

Student A: The Courage to Start Again

Student A is academically strong, clear-minded, and sincere in manner. Having studied in an international school, he communicates fluently in three languages and demonstrates a mature global outlook. It later emerged that he had previously enrolled in another well-known university but was unable to complete his degree.

When I asked about the details, he responded calmly, citing personal reasons—without elaboration, yet without avoidance. In that moment, what I saw was composure and self-reflection. He said simply, “I want to start working as soon as possible. I do not want to waste any more time.” Behind this sentence was a strong sense of self-discipline and a deep respect for time.

Starting again requires more courage than starting for the first time. Rather than allowing past setbacks to become a burden, Student A chose to move forward with maturity. He reminded me that true strength does not lie in never falling, but in the willingness to stand up again after every fall.

Student B: Finding One’s Rhythm Amid Challenge

Student B appeared reserved during our initial meeting. At first, I assumed he lacked confidence or initiative. Only later did I understand the story behind his hesitation. He has a long-term illness and requires ongoing medical treatment, placing far greater pressure on him than on his peers.

He shared, “I want to work as soon as possible—to earn money for medical expenses, and to be able to support myself.” What he faces is not merely the challenge of employment, but an ongoing negotiation with reality itself. His courage and perseverance extend far beyond what others might imagine.

Throughout our conversations, I observed his calmness and willingness to learn. He is quietly making progress, step by step, moving forward in his own time.



Living in the Present, Not Trapped by the Future

These two students reflect two extremes often seen among today's undergraduates. Some possess ideal conditions but hesitate to act; others face significant hardship yet refuse to give up hope. The difference lies not in their starting points, but in their attitudes.

Career planning is not only about preparing for the future—it is about taking action now.

Student A's acceptance of reality and steady progress represent a very practical form of resilience. Student B's willingness to try, even when the path ahead is difficult, is courage in its purest form. Living in the present does not mean abandoning future aspirations; it means learning how to draw strength from the here and now. As long as one is willing to take a step forward, one has not stopped.

A Message for Students

“When is the best time to start preparing for a job?”

My answer is always the same: now.

Preparation does not necessarily mean sending out résumés immediately. It means beginning today—by understanding yourself better and being open to trying new things.

Conclusion: Every Effort Made Today Shapes the Future

Effort may not change one's circumstances overnight, but it changes how we perceive them. While we cannot predict the world five years from now, we can choose how we act today. Living in the present is not short-sighted; it is a way of growing within reality.

When you are willing to take action, even at a slow pace, you are already creating a future of your own.