

Dear Young People,

We all have one pass (as far as we know!) at “life”, which stretches from 0 to, say, 85 or so. The first 10 or 15 years and the last 5 or so may not be very much under our control, but that still leaves 60-65 years during which we do have at least some control. A vast experience teaches us that these times are packed with joys and the pains, exhilaration's and disappointments, rewards and frustrations. We also know that it is within our possibilities, in part using the wisdom and experience of others (parents, teachers, friends and wise ones), and using our own best judgments, to maximize the good stuff.

Once upon a time one spent the first third or so of our useful lives learning and two thirds applying that learning to a career or job. But this is the 21st century and there is no learning that isn't obsolete in 3 or 5 years except the art of learning itself. So we must learn to learn well and be prepared to learn forever—this applies to the electrical engineer, the theoretical physicist, the milling machine operator, the policeman, and the high school teacher. All must continue to learn and then the key is that learning itself must give pleasure. This is certainly the way it is in science and in teaching.

In both these (and I'm sure many other professions), every day brings new challenges, new things to learn, and evidences of past joys. In science it is the process of discovery and the incredible beauty of nature, in the genes and in the stars. In teaching it is the revelation that you have struck sparks in young people, and these will be forever!

Sincerely,

Leon M. Lederman
Nobel Prize in Physics