

June 12, 2009

Dear High School Students,

Hi! I am looking forward to meeting you.

Several years ago, I studied some of the great discoveries in science in the twentieth century, like the discovery of the structure of DNA, and the discovery of how the atom is put together. I found that many of the discoveries had a similar pattern. First the scientist put in a lot of hard work and tried to understand the problem. Then, the scientist got stuck. Then, the scientist figured out a different way of looking at the problem, Finally, the scientist solved the problem. The “getting stuck phase” occurred in many of the great discoveries. It seems that when we get stuck on a problem, our minds begin to think in new and creative ways, even when we are not aware of what’s going on. Getting stuck is often part of the creative process. The same happens with creativity in the arts. So, you should not get discouraged when you get stuck on a problem. If you have done your homework and prepared your mind, getting stuck can be a good thing, not a bad thing.

With high hopes that you will have wonderful careers of getting stuck and then unstuck,

Alan Lightman

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