

Dear High School Nelema Cona,

I have a lot of dreams and ambitions for the person I have become as I write this letter. I hope that along the way, one has developed, learned, and overcome obstacles. Life can be challenging, and it's okay to feel overwhelmed at times.

I know it was a tremendous roller coaster through high school. Keep in mind that it's acceptable to have emotions of uncertainty and overwhelm occasionally. Narrowing ones path through friendships, relationships, and academic expectations can be difficult during high school. Life can throw us curveballs, but it's how we handle them that truly matters. I used to skip classes, which hurt my grades. I just wanted to fit in, which made me lose focus and skip almost all of my classes. Because I was under a lot of stress at home and my parents would drive me insane, the school was like my safe haven. There were so many personal issues at home that I simply wanted to get out of my house and do something fun since virtually every night I would cry myself to sleep and no one could hear me. I felt overwhelmed with emotion. This made me feel so insecure about my face that I put on makeup every day at school to hide my tears. Also, I wouldn't eat at home since I was disgusted by the way my parents spoke to me. So I'm telling one now to never hesitate to ask a therapist or counselor for assistance if one needs it. Make time for enjoyable and calming self-care activities that make one happy and at ease, such as reading, listening to music, taking a walk in nature, or going outside with the people they love. It's important for ones emotional health, so take care of ones and pay attention to what ones need.

Set aside money for savings and budgeting as ones top priorities. Find out how to save, budget, and handle ones money sensibly. I am aware that I would spend hundreds on clothing, food at fine restaurants, and makeup to cover up my tears and dark circles. I never got to experience what other kids felt like growing up with money, so when I got a part-time job at a retail store or found any other means to acquire extra money, I knew once that deposit hit, I would spend it. I don't think about saving at least \$20 on the side. I never received anything, so I had to rely on myself in every way I could. Also, taking my sibling out often affected my pocket because I was the only one working, but I don't regret it because it made us all closer. So make this your mail goal for oneself and leave ones parents' house. So please set clear financial goals and work towards them diligently. Also, look into financial aid and scholarship opportunities don't miss any opportunities. Pay attention to how one spend and stays out of debt. Whether it is through savings accounts, make an investment in one future. I wish someone told me this before I started to spend everything on designers. Keep in mind that having enough money allows one to pursue ones hobbies and aspirations and gives one peace of mind. Keep in mind that every dollar one save today is an investment in ones financial stability tomorrow or in the future.

I lost a lot of weight since I had to work more hours to pay off my parents' mortgage. I felt exhausted and out of breath. After telling them I got a job, my dad asked for every last dime

from me. Since it would have been the least expensive alternative, I often ate a lot of fast food almost everyday. Therefore, remember to keep everything to oneself and avoid sharing too much. Give ones physical and emotional health top priority. Plan frequent exercise, nutritious food, and lots of rest. To help one cope with the stresses of life and education, try stress-relieving practices like yoga, or meditation. Listen to ones body and seek medical help when needed. Remember that self-care is not selfish. Let ones body breath. Always put ones health first because it is ones most valuable possession.

Never forget that one is capable of great things, but in order to achieve them, one must look after oneself. Keep in mind that the future is one to design in accordance with one goals and desires. It is full of possibilities. Continue to advance with bravery, tenacity, and hopefulness, confident that one can accomplish anything you set ones mind to. As one travel this new chapter in ones life, practice self-compassion. Stick to one core beliefs, pursue ones interests, and meet the future with hope and fortitude.

With love and encouragement,  
Nelema Cona