

You have so much to offer to your community. Believe this and live that way. You are an expert on teenagers. You know what the source of full life is and you live that everyday. You are creative and well spoken. You are genuine. You are intelligent in a variety of topics; theology, teenagers, leadership, etc. Walk with your head held high. Sit tall. You belong at the table. You are capable of jobs with more prestige but you have been faithful to God's call. You must start carrying yourself like an equal with anyone you come across. Be humble but too often we think too highly of ourselves around other YL staff and too low of ourselves around people in our communities. You are created in the image of God and the Holy Spirit lives in you.

So just keep showing up. Organize your job in a way that allows you to be with people as much as possible. You should be increasingly doing what you uniquely are capable of and called to do. This means being with people. So show up to all of the regular things; games, concerts, lunch rooms etc. But also show up to funerals and offices, to the LGBTQ club, coffee shops and town hall meetings. Show up where kids are- we are a ministry of pursuit so especially go to where the skeptical kids are. Show up where adults are too. You should literally and figuratively spend half the game in the student section and half the game in the parent section.

But be healthy. Stay committed and keep working at this- whatever it takes. Don't be confused; this is your responsibility and no one else's. I hope you have people around you who encourages this but in reality this is your responsibility.

I know our job is hard. In fact I think to be an effective Young Life staff person requires as unique a skill set as any job I know. But let's be honest every job is hard. Every job requires hard work and high expectations. Most jobs require emotional investment. We aren't the only ones who work long days or weeks. We aren't the only ones who face pressure. Embrace this and do what it takes to take care of yourself.

We also aren't the only ones who care desperately about kids. Other ministries are doing great things. Churches, teachers, parents, coaches all want what's best for kids. They are our partners in caring for kids.

Young Life just is not very important. Kids and families are important. Christ is important. But if Young Life ended tomorrow our lives shouldn't change that much. We should still passionately and faithfully follow Christ wherever he leads us. We should still love others, show up in people's lives and invite them into God's story. We certainly aren't the only people doing this and God doesn't really need us to do His work. This should make us all let our shoulders down a little.

Stop caring about numbers. Take all of that emotional energy that we have been putting into numbers and put that into caring deeply about the kids that no one else is noticing, into the kids who need you the most--into the kids who may never turn into a good newsletter story kid. This is harder. This takes more time. This is worth it. We must become great storytellers because we may not be able to point to a huge club or have a picture from camp full of good looking, well dressed kids. This fruit may look different but it is worth it and it is what we have been called to. The first step in reaching hard to reach kids is to stop caring about numbers. If we raise your budget and we take big camp trips everyone is going to tell us great job and no one is going to ask us whether those are the hard to reach kids. We must carry this banner in our community and on our team- no one else will.

We all must do our part in helping the mission of Young Life better reflect God's Kingdom more fully. This includes the kids we serve, the leaders and the staff. It means that at every level of the mission there should be a mix of men and women and a variety of races and cultures. We don't have any control of our past as a mission but we do control our future. We all need to make decisions- even if they are unpopular and more difficult- to work towards a mission that reflects God's Kingdom and it must start now and it starts with each of us.

If we really want to be good at this we must be learners. Being a learner is active not passive. Seek out learning opportunities. It means reading on our own, asking questions, watching Ted Talks.... It doesn't matter how but we must seek it out- it won't find us. But don't just copy and paste. We must be active learners but we must also act and create. Make decisions, stop

delaying, try it, there is not some some elusive piece of knowledge or training out there. Take more chances. I don't know what God is calling you to risk but I know there is a temptation to play it safe. If we do a good job a lot of people will pat us on the back and say thanks but we are called to take more chances even if it makes us less popular.

Fundraising is not a necessary evil. If you continue to believe that you won't last long and you won't have the impact you are capable of having. You get a chance to invite people in to what God is doing. They are really good at making money but what they really want to do is make a difference in kids lives. You are good at making a difference in kids lives. So invite them in. If you don't you are robbing them of that joy. This is also your responsibility. I hope you can recruit a team around you to own this with you but you are not entitled to that.

Speaking of inviting; Invite people into your life. Invite them into your home. Invite them into your family. Invite them into your heart. This is where change happens in their life and in yours. Kids. Leaders. Committee. Parents. This is the best part so don't miss it.

This all sounds very serious and important and it is but don't forget that joy is one of the fruits of the spirit. Have fun. Be full of joy. Live a life that is contagiously fully alive and invite everyone you come across into this kind of life.

And let's tell kids about this kind of life. It is a full life that requires all of us. Don't just try to get kids to stand up at a say so. Christ asks for all that we are. He takes us just as we are but he doesn't expect us to stay there. It is as simple as saying yes to Christ's offer but let's help kids understand what they are saying yes to before we ask them to say yes.

Again I say take care of yourself. God may call you out of Young Life staff- and if so follow that call- but let's take care of ourselves so that when we leave YL staff it really is because He called us to something else and not because we didn't take care of ourselves. Don't ever fall to the temptation to confuse your identity with how Young Life is going. You are God's beloved and

*that will never change. I have to imagine that going to counseling would be good for many of us. I think everyone can benefit from counseling and all the more in a ministry that requires ourselves to pour ourselves out to others and when it is so easy to believe the lie that our worth is wrapped up in our performance.*

*So now go live into the story God has for you. A story that is full of adventure, joy, pain, transformation and impact.*