

It's Your Life— Take Control of It

Justin was a typical teenager. He thought more about cars, sports and girls than he did about his future. He just assumed that one way or another he'd figure out later what he wanted to be when he grew up. Right now he just wanted to graduate high school, get a job and an apartment and start living his own life.

He imagined himself with a nice truck, a cute girl beside him, blasting tunes as they roared off to one adventure after another. The money would come from that good job (whatever it might turn out to be) he'd get after graduating. He just couldn't wait to be out of the house so his parents couldn't run his life and nag him about what he's going to do in the future. "Once I graduate," he thought, "and I move out of my parents' house, I can really start living my life." Everything serious could be put off until later, when his life was really his own.

But Justin was wrong. He was already making decisions that were steering his life in one direction or another. He just didn't realize it. He felt like others were in charge and wouldn't let him run his own life. But every day he was making crucial decisions: choosing to study hard or goof off, do his homework or let it slide, give his best effort or just get by. Without realizing it, he was choosing to let his life just happen, instead of steering it in a direction of his own choosing.

He graduated high school with a 2.5 grade point average, although he could have done better, and started looking for a job. It wasn't long before he realized that the kind of jobs he could get were low-paying, made him work weekends and nights when he wanted to be out playing, and didn't have any future. He worked a lot but hardly ever had any money. He drove a beat-up little car and was barely able to afford that. And he couldn't afford to move into his own place, even with a roommate.

Justin saw that he was headed for a crummy life unless something changed. And what would that something be? He realized that it was his life and only he could make it better.

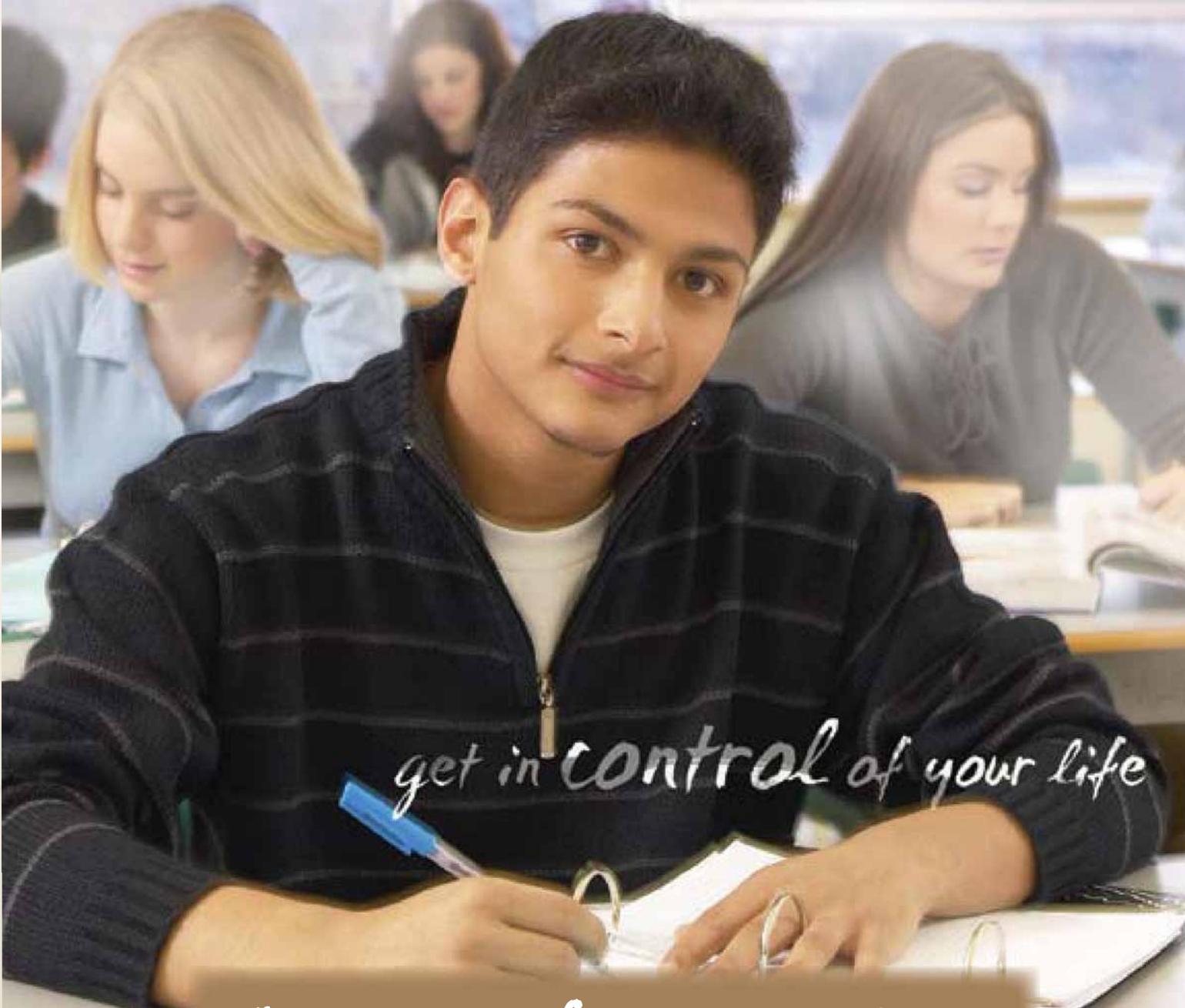
So he made the decision to get more education, research different careers and "buckle down," just like his parents and teachers had badgered him to do. Who would have guessed that they'd be right?

After Justin came to the realization that he was in charge of his own life, he started actively and strategically making decisions and setting goals, instead of trying to avoid those things. And, lo and behold, his new take-charge attitude started paying off.

Four years later he was a senior in college with a 3.7 GPA, working part-time, dating a great girl who was a pre-med major, and planning on a career as an engineer. He didn't let hard work or occasional setbacks discourage him because he knew that he alone was in charge of his life and he had decided not to give up on what he wanted.

Justin now has a bright future ahead of him and can look forward to the freedom of being self-sufficient and the satisfaction and rewards of accomplishing his goals.

Moral of the story: YOU are in charge of your life, even if you're still in high school, because you're making decisions all the time that steer you in one direction or another. So take control. Start researching and planning your choices and options. Then set a goal and work toward it. In a few years you can be successful and financially independent. Or, keep drifting and resist taking control of your life, and you'll end up working a crappy job and wondering why things didn't just somehow all work out the way you thought they would.



get in control of your life

“You know, the day I realized that I alone was responsible for how my life goes was the turning point in my life,” Justin says. “Before that I was trying to act independent and grown up by doing the opposite of what adults were telling me I should do. It seemed like they were trying to run my life. But in the end, it was only me who was running my life—running it off the road, that is. Once I made the decision to take control of my own destiny, even the hard work felt good, because I chose it. And, I knew I was doing it for my own reasons, not for someone else.”