

4 Life Lessons We Learned from Walt Disney

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Here's a social experiment. Next time you're in your dorm with suitemates, or taking a road trip with friends, grab your iPod and play "I'll Make a Man Out of You." As Donny Osmond's silky-smooth voice filters through the speakers, take note of how many people can recite the song without missing a single lyric (some may even add animated gestures while they sing). As long as you're singing with fellow college students, I'm willing to bet at least half of your group will complete the song seamlessly.

Disney movies like "Mulan," which graced us with the song in question, have been a cornerstone of our lives since we were old enough to walk. But it isn't until our college years that we have been able to appreciate the many life lessons those movies taught us. Here are four important messages brought to us courtesy of Walt Disney, which are more applicable now than ever.

Friendship is everything

As children, we may have overlooked such important sidekicks as Timon and Pumbaa, Sebastian or Abu. At the time, they seemed to be there for not much more than comic relief. But regardless of the various animal forms in which they appear, these sidekicks are more than just funny companions. They are the wise ones, the ones with sound advice, the ones who are tough on you when you need it most. Sure, they might be able to cheer you up when you're down. But the most durable friendships are formed during life crises, and the ones who stick by your side are the ones you can count on most. They might even give you cool life philosophies. I still live by "hakuna matata," and I know some of you do, too.



Stay childish

As we moved through the school system and packed up our things for college, so did Andy and his beloved group of childhood toys. I know I'm not the only one who had to hold back full-on sobs in the theater during "Toy Story 3," but not because my childhood was coming to a proverbial end. Rather, I understood the true importance of being a kid. Never hesitate to watch a few reruns of "Full House" or look up tamagotchis on eBay instead of studying. It's those moments that keep us young at heart, and prevent us from cracking under the pressure of the real world.

Don't be afraid to try new things

Have you ever heard the wolf cry to the blue-corned moon? Or asked the grinning bobcat why he grinned? One of Pocahontas' best messages was being unafraid to try new things. Being at college is what you make of it. Sure, it might take some time for you to break out of your comfort zone. But once you do, make sure you never take any opportunities for granted. Look around and realize where you are. You can study anything you want, travel to different continents and meet people from around the globe. Don't just dream about doing it. Get out there and live the dream.

Ignore the pessimists

If we're going by life lessons that "Mulan" taught us, the most obvious lesson is that women are stronger than men (which, in my biased opinion, I must say is a wonderful message). But the real overarching theme is you must tune out the naysayers. Mulan fought all kinds of uphill battles — quite literally, in some cases — but ended up bringing glory to her country because she didn't listen to those determined to bring her down. Even if your major is still undecided, or you're not doing so well in a class, it's OK. There will be circumstances every day that try to keep you down. All you need to do is focus on the goal ahead, and enjoy the looks on everyone's faces when you achieve it.



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