



Danger and Opportunity for Young Entrepreneurs

The twenties are the hardest decade in human development, You graduated from college, or whatever learning equivalent you chose. Now you're on your own. Really on your own. Jobs don't fall from the sky just because you have a college degree. Your friends are moving away in pursuit of their next steps. You don't want to live with your parents. They gave you luggage for graduation, a sure sign they don't want you living there either. One third of people in their twenties move to a new residence every year. You have a romantic interest, but you're unsure about sure about her or them. Or you. You will most likely date many people, and statistically you are likely to get dumped many times. Your friends start getting married and reproducing. It seems like everyone else has their act together. (They don't.) So many choices and decisions to make. So much instability. These issues mark the journey to finding yourself. Psychologists call them Identity Issues.

All of these issues are magnified when you are starting your own company. The emotional roller-coaster. The financial stress. Working ridiculously long hours. Questions about your worth. Guilt. Fear. Loneliness. Physical and mental exhaustion. Many founders become anxious and depressed. Some fall back on alcohol, drug, or other addictions. Many entrepreneurs become over-identified with their company. That's a bad strategy if or when your company fails.

Here are some strategies I offer to entrepreneurs that I am coaching. Slow down. Don't rush the process. Take stock in what you have already accomplished and the successes you have had. It's easier to build on top of a solid foundation. Developing rituals and boundaries will help you feel most stable. Get comfortable with uncertainty. Pretending that all is well around others is a quick path to unrelenting depression. Take care of yourself. Read things that wake up your heart and inspire you toward greatness. Surround yourself with people who support your passion. The quality of your relationships is more important than the quantity. Talk with others who deal with the same issues. Take your play more seriously. It's good for your heart, body, and cognitive development. Use your alone time to support and nurture yourself. Neurologically your brain is still developing into its adult shape well into your thirties; pruning away unused connections and strengthening the ones that remain. Be conscious about the neural connections you want to strengthen.

The good news is that things will get better. Not right now, but soon. The more success you have at this stage, the more likely you are to be successful in this business. And the next one.