

# Promises, promises

*Lofty aspirations often lead to disappointment*



This semester I will \_\_\_\_\_  
Go ahead. Pick up a pencil, and fill it out. Write in a promise. Jot in a goal for the next 18 weeks. Heck, draw a picture in the blank if it'll help you kill time in this class.

But one thing's for sure. You're probably not going to do whatever gets put into that blank.

Upperclassmen know what I'm talking about. Each semester starts with an adrenaline rush of optimism and goals. But two weeks and six morning classes later, your optimism has shrunk more than a condom left in the wallet of a junior high school boy.

So I'm going to do you a favor. I'm going to take the work out of making and breaking those promises. Somewhere in this column is the promise you made yourself this semester.

Before you and your dried up Sheik get disappointed, just keep reading. I'll let you know how it turns out. Then you can quit worrying about it.

Tell yourself you will work out more, sweating like an overworked Clydesdale until you have a butt tight enough to bounce quarters off of or a chest muscular enough to scare He-Man, but you will not be able to find parking at Campus Recreation the first two times you go.

Your workout routine will be limited to one-rep sets of lifting beer cases from the grocery cart to your car.

Your gut will become a flotation device. Even while taking a shower. Imagine yourself on the dean's list?

Not unless you kidnap the dean and force fluids. Two cases of Pabst Blue Ribbon might give him or her a buzz.

Everyone wants to be better organized — with schoolwork, housekeeping, bills.

But a week from now you'll create a pile, consisting of "mostly" non-living objects. Deciding that you'll never

have time to sort through it, you'll move the pile to the corner, kick whatever part of it still moves and hide it from company with a polyester throw rug.

Write "I will finally meet that special someone" in the blank and after 16 classified ads on *I'm-Not-Ugly-Really-I'm-Not-Online*, you will set up a date with your dream lover.

His name is Frank. Frank is 62, Chia Pet-hairy and needs to put his teeth in before each candlelit meal.

Watching your weight? Paying particular attention to fat intake, cholesterol and sodium?

After three rice cakes, two gallons of water and what you believe to be a hunger-induced mental sickness, you'll mug a Domino's pizza man in your neighborhood and eat the pizza.

You also take his keys and eat the three other pizzas still in his car.

Some people want to make it to class every morning, missing that 8:30 a.m. class only when they're deathly sick.

Interesting how many of them seem to have been dying all semester.

No professor is impressed when you say you have polio, especially if he was one of the men who helped invent a vaccine for it.

And your attempt to "spot" yourself with chicken pox? Foiled by an unexpected downpour of rain that washed off your Crayola marker efforts.

Of course, the most important goal some students have would be to improve their grades. Maybe not to dean's list level, but higher nevertheless.

But somewhere after Chapter 2 of your textbook, the football season/toga party/new season of "The Real World" begins.

It will all come down to your finals. Your professor tells you that you need to score a perfect 100 percent, twice.

If you're the kind who drinks too much, makes a fool of himself drinking or wakes up at the Nebraska Fairgrounds after drinking, you might consider a resolution against such shenanigans.

But damn nickel pitcher nights! Not only will you lose the contents of your entire wallet or purse on imported beer, but you will attempt to sing "Livin' La Vida Loca" without the karaoke machine again.

If you are not murdered outright, you'll somehow find sanctuary behind Broyhill Fountain, mistaking it, perhaps, for a sauna.

Work hard and save up some money for that thing you've always wanted, but after taxes, textbooks, overpriced popcorn at the Starship and several things called "Final Notices," you might have just enough money to buy a semester's worth of Ramen Noodles.

After 16 packages, you realize "chicken" is the worst flavor.

You bought nothing but "chicken" flavor.

Spending more time doing fun things with your friends seems like an easy promise to keep.

It's odd, but your friends want to date just about everyone you date. Sometimes even while you're still dating them.

Your friends must have good taste.

After two separate arguments on "whose bellbottoms are whose" the fallout is complete: each of you scribble vulgar insults on one another's windshields with white shoe polish.

Some of us struggle for independence, the gumption not to ask Mom and Dad for money. A noble goal.

Then comes the night you frantically dial your parents at 3 a.m.

Barely comprehensible, you tell them in a frenzied voice that if they don't send money by tomorrow, Vince and his brother Toby will be paying you a visit.

Your father tells you that you're "alone in the cave now" and proceeds to accidentally hang up the phone.

He then fails to put the receiver firmly back in the cradle and somehow sleeps through the dial tone, the loud insect tone signifying the phone had been left off the hook and the operator's voice telling him to hang the phone back up.

Vince, meanwhile, only takes three good coming back from.

Myself, I will be looking for another job. The perfect job that I actually enjoy going to and feel

Will my pride float in the toilet? Dammit, I hand out flyers better than anyone on the sidewalk!

It's an accomplishment really — the giant beaver costume made it pretty dang hard the first few weeks.



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# When I was your age ...

*Adults need to take responsibility for teaching children to be responsible*



"What the hell is the matter with kids these days?" you ask.

Of course 'kids' is rather vague, but I think I know who you mean. Kids killing kids, kids having kids, kids doing drugs, kids carrying weapons, kids, kids, kids. ...

Your question is moving to the forefront of our national, political discourse.

In fact, it was even addressed on the political talk show "Politically Incorrect" with Bill Maher.

And of course you and I both know nothing is an issue until it's been addressed on late-night TV.

Anyhow, so we're looking at things like the Woodstock '99 riots and the Columbine High School massacre, and

we're wondering what went wrong and who's to blame.

Maher suggested that one generation plants the trees and the next generation gets the shade, and that maybe this generation just has too much shade.

He supported this hypothesis by citing the fact that Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris (the Columbine killers) both came from upper-middle class homes, had dates to the prom, had money for recreation, etc.

Now there's certainly nothing fantastic about the idea — in fact I would wager that many subscribe to the opinion that kids today have it too easy, and the easy life is the root of all evil, or something like that.

What's so amazing is that on the show that evening there were two individuals that would qualify as members of Generation X, the lead singer of the musical group Biohazard and the chair of the College Republican National Committee, and they both heartily agreed with Mr. Maher.

I was aghast — floored even — that neither one of these guys would address the moral void which threatens our kids.

Maybe, just maybe, it's not that our children have been given too much shade. Maybe it's that the shade they've been given is provided by trees that are rotting from inside out.

Maybe it really is true that children learn by example, and we've set a piss poor example.

Maybe we have neglected to teach them the difference between right and wrong, abandoned all concepts of personal responsibility.

Maybe we should teach them some personal responsibility. I happen to believe we should. Hold them responsible that is.

But it appears that is not the national consensus as all fingers point to parents, the National Rifle Association, school administrators, MTV, Toys 'R Us and whoever else is within firing range.

But never the collective failure of our society.

Kids are confused. They don't know what to think or how to behave. And really, who could blame them. Look at how they grew up.

One-third of their peers never saw the light of day.

One-half of those who made it live

with only one parent.

All of them grew up in a nation whose leaders chose to turn a blind moral eye to a president who abuses his power and commits adultery.

Pastor Joe Wright put it best, delivering the invocation for the opening session of the Kansas Senate last year, and I'm sharing his prayer in full because I've never heard it stated better, and I certainly couldn't have said it better myself:

"Heavenly Father, we come before you today to ask Your forgiveness and to seek Your direction and guidance.

We know Your Word says, 'Woe on those who call evil good,' but that's exactly what we have done.

We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and reversed our values. We confess that.

We have ridiculed the absolute truth of Your Word and called it pluralism.

We have worshiped other gods and called it multiculturalism.

We have endorsed perversion and called it an alternative lifestyle.

We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery.

We have neglected the needy and

called it self preservation.

We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare.

We have killed our unborn children and called it a choice.

We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable.

We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem.

We have abused power and called it political savvy.

We have coveted our neighbor's possessions and called it ambition.

We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression.

We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment.

Search us, O God, and know our hearts today; cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Guide and bless these men and women who have been sent to direct us to the center of Your will.

Ask it in the name of Your Son, the living Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

It's time to give our children something substantial to hold onto instead of wondering where they went wrong.

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