

You applied for admittance into a graduate program in counseling and were accepted- congratulations! Now reality may be settling in... nervous and excited at the same time! Read through this list and take a breath- you can do it!

1. Remember- graduate school is hard work and it deserves attention and care.

Just because you were a stellar undergraduate student does not mean that your graduate degree in counseling will be “easy.” Counseling may look to be deceptively simple- feeling reflections, intentionality, immediacy... however, underneath is a vulnerability on the part of counselors and counselors-in-training. To be an effective counselor or counselor-in-training you need to “show up”- and this can be more challenging than traditional undergraduate education.

2. Take advantage of connections with faculty.

Faculty in counselor education programs have all been there- they have all survived a Master’s program. Talk to them, take risks, and put yourself out there! Start fostering professional relationships early in your graduate career. Positive relationships can turn into opportunities for research or great recommendations for internships and employment.

3. Live within your means.

Graduate education is an investment in yourself and your talents. However, that investment doesn’t come cheap. That doesn’t mean you should be eating freeze-dried, packaged ramen for three meals a day (because seriously, how nutritious can something be that you can buy for 39 cents in a cellophane package?!) but it also means perhaps \$6 lattes are a splurge and not a daily occurrence. You’ll thank me later.

4. Complete the readings that are assigned for class!

I know, I know... you didn’t always need to do this for your undergrad... but it is imperative in graduate school. Many faculty teach in a seminar style format which means participation is expected from members of the course. Save yourself the embarrassment of saying, “Uhhhh... I wasn’t able to complete the readings...” As the Nike ads say: “Just do it.”

5. Take care of YOU!

Counseling is a wellness profession, and it is imperative to take care of yourself during this very challenging time. Go for walks, listen to music, do yoga, play with animals, spend time with family and friends... all important during graduate school!

6. Live in the moment.

This is the only moment you know you will have... so enjoy it. Breathe in and out... and connect with gratitude. You are entering a profession that values wellness and relationships... and what better way to begin that mindset than living gratefully in this moment.

7. Focus on learning, not grades.

This may seem counterintuitive, but in the end, what is important is learning. That is not to say you should skip reading assignments or projects, but a B is NOT the end of the world.

8. Remember, graduate school is not the “end” of learning- it is just the beginning!

Graduate school is the start of your professional career and you will spend the rest of your career engaged in professional development to further enhance and hone your skills. Use graduate school as a time to determine what areas interest you most- after graduation, you can focus your time and energy on attending workshops and conferences catered to your interests!

9. Make the most of your practicum and internship experiences.

Practicum and internship is a time for learning, growing, and experiencing what life may be like as a counselor. Use this time wisely! Consult with peers and supervisors! Do additional readings on treatment planning, different theoretical approaches and modalities, ask questions. An internship may lead to a professional position; remember you are a professional!