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Life Again: Resist the Greying of Existence

Ok, it's that time of the year again when we make New Year's resolutions. They are usually bland and predictable, and, as a result, are often broken within the first month. Or possibly even the first day?!

But the hardest resolutions of all are the ones that require CHANGE of a greater magnitude, those habits which have been gradually creeping up on you and are reaching crisis point. They are becoming the fundamental essence of who you are, or who you appear to be. If not in the minds of others, certainly in your own mind. Interestingly, the latter mind is the only one that really counts.

If you are finding that life has become a little boring and unsurprising, don't fret. Most people feel the same way. It's the trap I fell into during critical stages of my life, when the mundane nature of daily life took over. I slipped into bad habits and beat myself up without making the decisive changes I needed to make. I needed to unstitch myself.

The truth is that we are trapped in this consumer-driven world, deeply affected by what might be called "affluenza", a toxic and blinding disease with the basic assumption that more is always better and more of self is always good. In the Western World, sadly, we all reside in this same bubble.

Make no mistake, like Steve Jobs did himself, even though the words that are much attributed to being given by him on his deathbed are believed to be a hoax.

So, how do we get out of self-imposed box that we often trap ourselves in? I can reel off many areas that can all make significant changes to in our lives, and they are all critical. But only you know what changes are most important for you. For example, if you're fat and flabby and struggling to breathe, then diet, exercise and a reduction of alcohol and cigarettes must be addressed.

We do however, all need a reason to make such significant changes, and one reason that I can suggest is CURIOSITY. We grow up as kids wanting to find out about everything. The great unknown. And then we suddenly lose our curiosity. It's weird.

Living without curiosity makes life boring, whilst its presence keeps us more alive and energetic. It keeps the mind strong and in good shape. It keeps us young. For young parents it is critical to be able to respond knowledgeably to children's needs for answers. They'll know if you don't have the answers. They'll know even more if you don't seem to care, or if you brush them off and keep your nose on the little screen. "My parents don't know and they don't care."



But having curiosity doesn't mean that you have to change who you are. My counsellor always emphasised that "we are who we are." I like the words of the song "Miracle of the moment" by Curtis Chapman.

"Would we really want to change everything?
Cause we are who and where
And what we are now
And this is the only moment
We can do anything about
So breathe it in and breathe it out
And listen to your heartbeat
There's a wonder in the here and now
It's right there in front of you
I don't want you to miss the miracle of the moment."

So, as you are rolling into the new year, make the necessary adjustments to what you are thinking and feeling. Become curious and interested in the world around you. Sport is great, your footy team is great, your mates are fantastic, but broaden your horizons. Learn more about others, about other countries, other languages, about nature and how it all comes together. Believe in something beyond yourself.

Existence won't become bland if you give gratitude and appreciation to your own station in life. Stretch towards the stars but don't reach for them. In Australia, we are lucky to be as free as we are. To be normal, regular people. We must cherish our rights to our opinions, and our right to stuff up along the way.

I often mention my Aunt Ruth who worked her whole life as a librarian and never married. She was confident, opinioned, strident in every way. Took no prisoners. She had a full and fulfilling life and on her headstone we wrote the words spoken by Polonius in Shakespeare's Hamlet. "This above all: to thine own self be true." I reckon she nailed it.

So, what did Stephen Jobs actually say on his death bed? His sister Mona's eulogy as published in the New York Times was beautiful.

"His final words, before embarking, he'd looked at his sister Patty, then for a long time at his children, then at his life's partner, Laurene, and then over their shoulders past them.

Steve's final words were:

OH WOW. OH WOW. OH WOW."



So, give this coming year back to yourself and your loved ones. In doing so, you'll be happier in every part of your life. Especially in your workplace.

By Gareth Andrews, Founder – Life Again Foundation. For more details, visit the website lifeagain.com.au