Age Is Just A Number

By Kelly Fisher

For the longest time I swore I woke up feeling a different age every morning. Some days I woke up feeling bright, young and ready to meet the day. Other days, I woke up feeling a hundred years old wondering exactly why my back hurts and asking myself "do I absolutely have to get out of bed today?" After reflecting on why my days varied so much in feeling, I realized that how old or young I was feeling was not only a mental state, but how I was treating my body.

I came to this small revelation upon meeting my boyfriend's family for the first time last 4th of July. The first family member I met was his grandmother, who at the time and unbeknownst to me, was ninety-four years old. She was vibrant, quick-witted and extraordinarily intelligent. As we were getting to know each other, she mentioned planning a trip to Las Vegas for her ninety-fifth birthday. I tried to keep my look of shock to myself when I realized she was about twenty years older than I had pegged her as.

In that moment, I realized that the only reason that I would ever have mornings where I woke up feeling a hundred years old was all due to how I treated myself. Age meant nothing to her other than getting to plan another birthday party for herself. I wanted to be like her when I was ninety-five; in all reality, I wanted to be like her now. I was a twenty-two year old aspiring to feel as good as a ninety-five year old.

So from that day and moving forward, I decided to make a change, multiple changes, for that matter. The first thing I changed was my drinking habits. Now, I thought that I was acting my age by drinking alcohol during the week with my friends, but really I was hurting my body and causing myself to perceivably feel a lot older than I should have. I decided to cut it back to the weekends and began feeling better during the week.

My next big change was my eating habits. For the majority of my life, the list of ingredients and nutrition panels were just extra text on the box. So I started learning about what the ingredients I was putting into my body actually meant to my well-being. I stopped eating ingredients that I couldn't pronounce and began eating things that were natural, not processed. I learned that I was sensitive to gluten and dairy, and quit eating them altogether. I thought that I would need some super-human strength to change my diet, but I started feeling fantastic when I woke up in the morning. After about a week I felt such an incredible change in my energy levels and happiness, there was no question about reverting back to my normal eating habits. I was a twenty-two year old who felt as vibrant and young as ever. I felt the way I likely should have felt.

My biggest change was by far the hardest thing to convince myself to do – exercise. I was never really an active person (other than working in a restaurant and running from table to table), so going for a jog was never really on my list of things to do on any given day. Once again, I assumed that I would need to be some kind of superhero to get out of bed an hour earlier and go to the gym. I'll be honest, at first, it was, but then I began to feel my attitude change and a shift in how healthy I felt. I became excited to get up and get on the treadmill, because it woke me up even better than a cup of coffee ever did.

After learning how to treat myself better and breaking some bad habits, I now understand what getting older and aging really means – absolutely nothing. Age is much more conceptual and less concrete than I ever realized. How you feel when you wake up is all about how you treat yourself and has nothing to do with what year you were born in. Age is just a number that only has meaning if you assign meaning to it. Stop acting your age, and start acting how you feel.

Kelly is a Graphic Designer from New Jersey