



How Old Would You Be If You Didn't Know How Old You Were

Satchel Paige

This article is not so much written for the younger crowd let's say up to about 30 years of age who generally do not often think about "father time." As life events 'typically' unfold they have most of their lives still out in front of them, very little of their lives belongs in the past, therefore they really have not accumulated anywhere close to a "fine cargo of life experiences" nor are they likely to feel any particular sense of urgency around age because they see having all the time in the world.

So, that leaves the rest of us to try and answer the question; how old would you be if you didn't know how old you were? I mean if you didn't have any idea of your actual age in years, what would guide you to an answer?

This year I celebrated what can only be described as a milestone for me, my 65th birthday. It was a milestone particularly because of my near death experience some 8 years previous

which led to a double lung transplant and a second chance at life.

It is considered a milestone in society as well because traditionally it has always been considered the so called age of retirement, when one officially becomes a senior citizen eligible for Canada Pension. These days however, age is much more of a relative term and it is worthy to note, that over time there has been a gradual shift in how society views aging. We have all heard that; 70 is the new 50, 60 is the new 40, 50 is the new 30, and 30 is the new 20. Numbers, numbers, it's all very confusing or rather perhaps it is all a state of mind?

A man's age is something impressive, it sums up his life: maturity reached slowly and against many obstacles, illnesses cured: griefs and despairs overcome, and unconscious risks taken; maturity formed through so many desires, hopes, regrets, forgotten things, loves. A man's age represents a fine cargo of experiences and memories.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry,
Wartime Writings 1939-1944.

Interestingly, as I continue to age, I find myself quite naturally becoming much more sensitive to the issue of aging or should I say more introspective about the value of my life. What has my living meant to me? In addition to my first 57 years, how have I taken advantage of my second chance at life? Have I touched the lives of others in meaningful ways?

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Have I made a contribution in some way in my community? What example have I set for my children, what have I taught them, or what opportunities have I given them to learn? Of course I know that I am not unique in this way. It is quite nature for most all of us to become increasingly introspective as we age.

If I can make the leap, perhaps the answer to the question of how old we would be if we didn't know how old we were is really more about how old we actually feel and why, versus the number of years we have actually lived.

To me a man best determines his age by sorting through his "fine cargo of experiences and memories" and understand them in terms of how they have impacted him; intellectually, emotionally, spiritually and physically. These are what I have called in the past the dimensions of self. Upon reflection for me, it probably wasn't until I hit my mid thirties that I became much more consciously aware of these dimensions and began to question how well I was doing at keeping them in balance. My nature it seemed or put another way, what I valued in my life, led me more toward living a life that was balanced rather than a life driven to the accomplishment of one particular goal. For many it is often a career goal of some kind leading to the accumulation of wealth, power and position, and the trappings that come with it.

"I don't want to get to the end of my life and find that I lived just the length of it. I want to have lived the width of it as well." **Diane Ackerman**

Of course one of the great indicators of how well we are doing in our lives on a day-to-day basis is the level of stress that we might be experiencing at any particular time. The greater the level of stress experienced; physically, cognitively and behaviourally, the greater the likelihood that we are not living in congruence with who we are in the world. Whether it is because of the circumstances we find ourselves in which we may or may not be able to control or because we have so little self awareness that we have no idea of who we are or what we believe in.

Nobody grows old merely by living a number of years. We grow old by deserting our ideals. Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul.
Samuel Ullman

It follows then that a man's age is directly proportionate to the congruency he finds in his life over time. That is to say a congruency with who he is in terms of his; personality, values, needs not wants met, interests (personal & professional).

But not to stop there, one ideally needs to have a passion in life, an essential reason for their very existence, a mission or purpose for their lives. That purpose should embrace both their personal and

professional lives. Having such a purpose provides direction and a focus in one's life.

With a directed focus or reason to get up every day there is a greater likelihood that this will result in a fulfilling and satisfying life.



Through the Looking Glass

So then, age is really very much a state of mind. If you see yourself as young or feel young at heart it will be reflected in the looking glass. You will likely look and most certainly feel younger than your actual years.

That young at heart feeling is not something someone is born with but actually comes about as a result of finding your way to a congruence between who you are and how you live your life. So get out and participate, explore, uncover that youthful feeling, that fountain of youth even!

Oh and by the way.....based upon my life of experiences and how I view each of them relative to the 65 actual years I have lived, I **'FEEL'** about 46 years old.

Coach Ladd