



# The Down Side of Knowing What You Want to Be When You Grow Up

By Joel Godina

## What do you want to be when you grow up?

You hear this question a lot growing up, and we had no problem answering as kids.

"A doctor! An astronaut! A dinosaur!" I'm not sure how one could become a dinosaur, but we were in tune with what we wanted. Sure, we were young and didn't know any better but more importantly there was a lack of inhibitors.

Now I don't know at what age we stopped receiving this question. To be quite honest, I don't think we ever did. The question was simply rephrased throughout various transitional periods of our lives:

*Kids: What do you want to be when you grow up?*

*Teenagers: Have you considered what you're going to study in college?*

*Adults: What do you do for work?*

## Why do we ask these questions?

I like to believe they come from a place of sincerity and an opportunity to discuss the various routes and destinations in life.

Unfortunately, I think the glass is half empty in this case. These questions are often asked to determine if those with dreams are in need of a cautionary tale.

*"A painter? Let me tell you a story about a starving artist."*

*"A dancer? We need more contributing members to society; let me explain the real world."*

*"A musician? I heard there's no money in that industry, why don't you try something more realistic?"*

Naturally we value the word of our elders so these messages have quite an impact in our lives. With time we drift apart from what we want to be to what we've been told we could be. Sometimes we still hear an echo of our past self, some silence it, some move on, or some never had that voice.

But what about those who knew and never let go of what they wanted to be?

Fortunately, I knew what I wanted to be since my third grade science class.

Here's the downside of knowing what you want to be when you grow up. It started as a dream, it was molded into a title, and now it's an endless pursuit.

You can see exactly where you want to be, as vivid as a dream. The career, environment, friends, family, leisure time, food, routine, hobbies. You've seen the version of yourself fulfilling all these dreams for years. They're about as far as your eye can visibly see them, but no further.

Naturally you walk towards them, but you don't seem to be getting any closer. So you begin to pick up your pace, but they're still no closer. What if I run? Sprint? You soon realize as your ambition grows to reach them, their ambition grows to keep moving forward.

I'm hoping I can close that gap. I've noticed a difference between their movement and mine. They're not looking back to see how close I am, as I'm looking up to see how far they are. Maybe if I stop glancing up and focus on my pace, those few seconds will make the difference.