

WHO SAYS YOU CAN'T?

Growing up as a child I always dreamed of a better life. I was not as unfortunate as others, but I had a common want to escape the world as I knew it, and what surrounded me every day.

I remember thinking big from a young age, yet there always seemed something that prevented me from

believing it would ever be my reality.

As most kids do, I would watch people on TV, listen to singers, or see businessmen and wish I could achieve like that.

My parents always attempted to create a happy environment for me and were always supportive, although kids see things in a different way to how their parents hope at times.

My father was a man that could be on either side of the equation.

He could be extremely hard on one hand, and yet the most loving person I know on the other.

Through his hard side he taught me a lot, though, and one major thing was that giving up just does not cut it. Second was never good enough and he expected the

most out of everything I
committed to.

It was tough to handle at
times, yet I now see the
massive effect those teachings
had on where I am today.

His never give up attitude is
something that will stay
cemented in me forever.

As for my mother, she never
had a doubt or really
questioned me.

My parents didn't have much money when I was growing up, and that was difficult to watch. My parents are both unconditionally loving people, and for that I am ever indebted.

For some reason, though, I still did not like to hang around, or abide by the rules.

It is not what you own in this world, it is what legacy you leave behind that matters.

My mother I began to find comfort in my grandfather and my aunty.

When my parents moved from my grandparents' home, I decided to stay put rather than

move with them. I looked up to my grandfather as a role model because of

his strong connection with his family and, among so much money and

external respect, he had a sense of fulfilment. He seemed at peace with the world and used his strong mind to deal with all his family's issues. On a daily basis he would go down to the local church and still serve as an altar boy. That was such an awakening; being young, I had a misconception of

what it was like to be
successful. I equated success
to money, only to grow
up and appreciate that he was
really rich, abundant in all
areas, not only in
the monetary sense.

One of the hardest moments
of my life was when my
grandfather was
diagnosed with cancer. As a
twelve year old I would kneel
in the shower,

crying and praying to God to cure him. Without realising it at the time, I

was trying to cure myself of the emotional pain and suffering I was about

to endure. After three long years, my grandfather finally gave up his battle

with cancer. As expected, my battle in life was just beginning. The world

around me seemed to crumble. The rock of the family was gone, and a deep sense of loss would follow me for many years to come.

Living in a working class suburb of Melbourne, I thought my opportunities were limited. Anger towards the world really started to build up. I chose to

run instead of facing it. I began losing all sense of direction, and became a child who would go out just to cause problems. Nearly getting kicked out of school, getting into vicious fights and having little respect for the world were becoming my way of life. My friends at the time seemed to show me a lot of love. We would hang

out in the backstreets all night
just thinking how we would
get our next

laugh. That laugh didn't really
have many boundaries and
would go

against authority. I was on a
one-way road to self-
destruction. I knew all

along that what I was doing
wasn't a true reflection of who
I really was,

but I was living the way I
thought I had to. I guess it was
for attention,
acceptance, praise,
recognition, selfish
satisfaction, and every other
feeling that leads to
unhappiness.

‘There can be no happiness if
the things we believe in are
different from the things we
do.’

Freya Stark

There was a bridge near my house that I used to look over and reflect. I

was only about fourteen at the time, but I would analyse the cars as they

drove past. I was fascinated by the fact that everyone seemed to be in their

own worlds, driving to their own destination, yet we are all part of the

same 'big world.' I would see
someone driving a Mercedes
Benz, and

shortly after someone else
drive past in an old Toyota,
and try to figure out

why the tables weren't
turned. Why did this woman
get to drive a car like

that, and the other guy didn't?
Was it by chance? Then I
would refer back

to 'but we are in the same world.' I even remember questioning whether the person in the Mercedes was really happy and whether the other guy was sad. I was intrigued with human emotion, the different ways of life, but more importantly, with answers. At the time it had no real effect on

myself, it would only help to reflect on others, but the interest always

remained. I always felt that I was here to affect the world. Little did I

know I was doing it all along with my actions, but I guess that's a common

trait with most people these days.

A few years went by and not much had changed. I met a girl who would

become my girlfriend for three years, and I based my happiness around her presence. Things were great at the start, then just seemed to crumble, much like most events that were taking place in my life. We would fight, and things turned into a real disaster. I found out that she was cheating on

me. Even though our relationship was on the rocks, this event sent me to a real emptiness once again. It's become apparent that most of us who aren't self-aware don't feel the impact of our actions until they come around and knock on our door.

I couldn't eat or sleep, my whole day and every ounce of energy revolved

around reminding me of this
deep pain I was experiencing. I
felt as if she

hadn't finished in my life yet,
and told myself that I needed
her in order to

live. We got back together,
and after a while the feelings
started to fade. I

believe it was my lies telling
me that I needed the comfort
of knowing that

she still loved me. I now
realise it was a selfish act that
I thought was

protecting me. Making the
decision to leave was the
hardest one I've ever

had to make, and was a real
test of strength. I just knew
there were things I

had to do in life first, and I
needed to do them on my
own. Looking back, I

don't really ever think I was in love with who she was, but in love with

filling my emotional gaps with her presence.

After losing all contact with my ex-girlfriend, I lost contact with what I

believed was happiness. Once again, I began to look for external things to

complete me. All along, I didn't realise I was doing it for that reason, but

more importantly I was
blinded to the fact that
complete happiness can
only be attained within one's
self. So off I went, on another
journey to
outside happiness.

I began to live a party lifestyle.
Took up smoking, was drinking
heavily,

and began experimenting with
drugs. I just lived for the
weekends. I was

doing a Commerce degree at university, but I knew that was not what I

wanted out of life. Sitting in a lecture one day with about 300 other

students, my mind was racing.

All I could think about was how I would be

competing with these other people for a job that I didn't even want. I knew

I had two options right there:
stay and live a life I'd never be
happy with,

or take the leap of faith
straight into the unknown
without having a clue as
to what I wanted to do.

I stood up, picked up my
books, walked out, and never
looked back. As

most parents do, mine wanted
me to finish the degree, but I
just knew that

I didn't want to live my life by what social expectation deems appropriate,

so I decided to take the risk.

The main point, however, was that I didn't

have a clear vision as to what I really wanted out of life, I just knew I

didn't want to be where I was.

I started working for a marketing company,

left that, then got a full-time sales job. I had an uncanny ability to excel in

both occupations and was promoted as the youngest sales coach in the

company, even though I had only been there for six months. But there was

only one thing: it didn't fulfil me!

During this time I partnered with my brother and we began a clothing

importing business. Still
unsure as to what my true
passion in life was, I
can honestly admit that I was
never 100 per cent
committed. I worked at it,
but it was only to try and
generate money, because
that's where I thought
happiness lay. With another
one of my assumptions about
life's greatness

gone, I was exhausting all avenues, and the truth was close to showing itself once again. This time it would have no mercy.

I was close to nineteen at the time, flying over to Italy and reading books on negotiation. Not something the average teenager does, so I definitely have no regrets. While looking out of the plane window, I would think

about where my life was
headed. What is all of this?
What does it all
mean? What I am doing here?
I wouldn't give these
questions too much
energy as I thought my time
needed to be better spent. I
now see that that
belief was far from the truth.
Instead of answering those
questions, I

would mentally re-enact the scenario of me walking into the boardroom, surrounded by international businessmen, trying to get the best deal. I was nervous, anxious, but amazingly excited at the same time. I knew that I was never going to live a life that was less than what I knew I deserved. I

was never willing to settle or
accept that I couldn't be my
own boss, or
live that dream life.

By the age of twenty-one I had
been to Europe five times for
the business.

I always put on a happy face
and told people about it,
which gave me some
satisfaction. I thought I had
found happiness by
attempting to portray this

great lifestyle I made out I was living. Every time someone asked me how

I was, I would say 'loving life'.

What these people didn't know, is by that

stage, I was addicted to drugs, couldn't make a relationship work, I was

broke, mentally, emotionally and spiritually spent, and had no sense of

direction. I would hang out all
night smoking dope just to try
and cloud the
confusion of my inner self. It's
like putting a thousand
bandaids over a
fresh wound. It doesn't matter
how many you put on top, the
wound is still
there and as fresh as always.
On the outside, everything
seemed perfect,

because I was pretty good at
hiding it. Who knew all along?
I did. I was

lying to myself, and being me,
I had the ability to know my
own truth

— a gift we all have.

I knew I was lost and would
call out to a God I didn't even
really feel or

understand to light up the
path for me and show me the
right direction. Did

I ever doubt God's presence?
Of course I did, especially at
the times when

I was so low. But who was I to
turn to? I had already invested
all of my

energy into things that I
thought would make me
happy.

People began to come into my
life and I would hear them talk
about a real

happiness. I guess they were
always there; my mind just
chose to take

some notice of them now. I
repeat, I would 'hear' them,
because in order

for me to be really interested,
I would have listened, and I
didn't. I

couldn't imagine such
fulfilment without what I had
thought appropriate

to fill it, so I would reject them just as quickly. I would argue and come up

with so many different excuses and get frustrated as they would throw my

lies back at me with the question, 'Well, are you really happy?' Funnily

enough, I would say yes. Every time I said it, I knew I was lying, and it

would have even more of a
detrimental effect on my life. I
was scared to

venture out of my fear, as
weird as that sounds. I felt my
truth arising

more, that deep voice inside.

But I didn't act upon it,
because I guess I

didn't have the faith that it
could change my life. Even
though I always

knew I was a good person
deep down, I would keep
doing things against
that belief, and it would
confuse me even more.

Things were arising that would
make me question everything
I was doing.

The hardest part was
questioning those actions I
had previously done
subconsciously. One particular
night I hit what I thought was
my lowest

point. After having another big weekend on a cocktail of drugs, I hadn't slept for forty-eight hours. I was mentally and physically exhausted. This was no ordinary 'come down'. No words can ever describe the feeling of emptiness. I thought this was it, the end of any little hope I had tried to

hold on to. I was wishing the ground would just open up and swallow me.

Standing in my bedroom, feeling numb to everything around me, and

having thoughts that it would be easier if I were dead, I felt as if there was

nowhere to turn. A deep sadness and fear came over me, like a child

locked in a dark room, but a
thousand times worse. I broke
down, got on

my knees, and screamed out
to God, saying 'Where the hell
are you now?'

I was so low that I felt I had to
reach up to touch the bottom.
Choked up

and tears blurring my sight, I
stood up only to be facing
myself in the

mirror. Through the tears, I looked deformed, until I wiped them away. My

face became clearer and the most overwhelming feeling came over me.

Such an awakening and enlightening experience that it would change my

life forever. I stood there staring at myself for twenty minutes. I finally

realised the person I had
wanted to be my whole life
was looking straight
back at me. And so OUR
JOURNEY BEGINS...