Growing up

Somewhere between yesterday and fifteen years ago, I grew up. Today I celebrate my 30th birthday. When I was fifteen it felt like there was no escape. My father was sick and dying and I couldn't or rather, didn't want to accept it. I felt helpless and powerless. Yet, I have survived and live in a world without him. I've grown up, learned to drive a car without him, stand in the kitchen washing the dishes while the soup simmers on the stove. I change the sheets, take out the trash and bring in the mail. I work, buy groceries, pay the bills, and check my email.

When did I grow up so much? I just learned how to ride a bike and tie my shoes. I just went down the slide at the pool on a sunny school-free Wednesday afternoon and stuffed myself with candy afterwards. When did all these obligations come along? There was a time when my Mom called me to dinner, made a doctor's appointment for me and drove me there. Brought me a hot water bottle and food when I was sick in bed. Scared away the ghosts under my bed and kissed me goodnight.

Seriously, when did I grow up like this? I used to count the days until my birthday. Today, time just flies by. In fact, slips through my fingers like a glittering fish. I wasn't always an adult; it came step by step. Snuck up and became a part of me. I have learned a lot on my way so far and if there's something I would consciously convey to my younger self, it would be this:

Everything is created in your head. The only thing you can control is yourself, your thoughts and feelings. The behavior or feelings and views of others are not in your control, but your reaction to them is. Not everything needs your reaction. Learn to ask yourself: is this a reaction of my ego? You cannot change other people and their behavior, you can only love them or not. Everyone has their own story and it is important to accept people for who they are. That doesn't

mean you have to tolerate their behavior towards you. You decide who or what you want in your life. You have a lot more choice than you think you do.

Learn to regulate your thoughts, feelings, and emotions (and not let them control you). That, and your habits will determine your life. Don't take everything so personally. Learn to listen and not react. Never stop learning. What you learn is more important than how you temporarily feel. Feelings pass, the knowledge you have acquired does not. Time doesn't heal all wounds, but wisdom does.

Take risks, venture out of your comfort zone and allow yourself to change. Only those who change survive. Suffering is part of life. Without suffering there is no change. Feelings are there to be felt. So, deal with yourself, with life and the people in it. Live sincerely, honestly and tell the truth. Be honest with yourself. Learn to communicate from your heart and not your ego, strengthen your intuition and listen to your inner voice. If this all sounds like hocus-pocus, then maybe just try this: instead of chasing after happiness, try to be a good person.

Life is all about letting go. Letting go of beliefs, memories, loved ones, jobs, relationships, objects, homes, friends and fashion trends. Everything comes and goes, that's life. The only thing we can say for sure is that life, with all its experiences, good and bad, is a gift.

All the best
Mary