

## Letter to my Younger Sister

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Don't grow up too fast.

Most of us have been there. You are young and aching to be older. Longing to put makeup on your face, grow into an adult body, and be free of your parents' rules. You are picturing our future wedding, what dress to wear, and what partner would be awaiting you at the end of the aisle. You are imagining your future house, with colorful soft paint, horses in the back, and a whole room just for your clothes. You are thinking of your future jobs, ballerina, mermaid, astronaut, lion tamer. You are dreaming of future adventures, eating a baguette on top of the eiffel tower, sledding with penguins in Antarctica, meeting your favorite movie characters, visiting a unicorn sanctuary, or even attending university.

Keep these fantasies just as they are, fantasies. At least for as long as you can. We all grow up eventually, and when we do, most of us will miss our childhood. We will long for the days when we didn't have to worry all that much about things like appearance or societal standards, bills, grocery shopping, laundry, or heartbreak. When we could come home to the embrace of our family, dinner on the table, laundry washed and folded, and the only thing to worry about was which toy to play with first, what movie to watch, whether we want the nightlight on or off, or which ice cream flavor we would eat after dinner.

Don't be ashamed.

Nowadays, people are ashamed about so many things: beauty, possessions, ability or disability, identity, vulnerability, love, jobs, etc. Don't be scared to show the world who you really are and what you have to offer. Be confident in your beauty, don't let society tell you what is or is not beautiful. The beauty in humanity is our differences. We come in all shapes, sizes, and colors. There are things about ourselves that we cannot change, and that is okay, and there will always be others that will adore you regardless. And regarding the things we can change, we should change them for ourselves and no one else.

Possessions are not what makes a person. It doesn't matter how many you have or how much you paid for them. Possessions can sometimes show a person's identity, through what matters to them most, their style, their interests, or their memories, but we begin and end life with just ourselves and the only thing we ever really need is ourselves. If you would like to share who you are with the world, you can always share it with actions and words.

Don't ever feel the need to hide your identity. If you're a horse girl, be proud to be a horse girl. Or If you find out you don't identify with being a girl at all, own it. If anyone ever makes you feel bad about being yourself, they are not worth being in your life.

Love who you want to love. It doesn't matter what anyone else thinks of their job, past, gender, economic class, or appearance, if they make you feel happy and secure and treat you like the goddess you are, keep them close. Like I always tell my dog, our job is to love and protect each other, find people that will love and protect you unconditionally and that you will love and protect back and never be ashamed of that. And I am not just talking about romantic relationships- love for friends and family can be just as strong. And as romantic relationships may come and go, if you have found your right people, they will stay with you through it all.

Never be ashamed of showing others your true feelings. I have noticed that many people today don't show their feelings enough. If you love someone, tell them and tell them why you love them. If someone is offending you or mistreating you, tell them how you feel and why. Nobody can ever take away how you feel. The world needs more openness, honesty, communication and more people in touch with their emotions and not afraid to share them with others. Screw the outdated concept that you should keep those things to yourself.

Learn, Love, and Live.

Who you are today will not be who you are tomorrow. Everyday you will learn something new and grow older. Take advantage of the time you have in this life and never stop learning as much as you can. Take on many hobbies and opportunities, learn multiple languages, immerse yourself in different cultures, connect with a variety of different people, read books, and always inquire. Remember- don't knock it until you try it and keep an open mind. And if you fail sometimes, don't be scared to try again. Just know that it's okay to be a work in progress.

For now- don't worry about love and relationships, beauty standards, or any of the other things society tells us we need to worry about. You won't be missing out on anything. Be a kid for as long as you can, trust me you won't regret it.