

I am often asked by many as to how I maintain my effervescence, my non-stop laughter, my incredible excitement over the tiniest of things, my zest for life... and I reply that growing old is not a option... but growing up is! Look around you, and you see adults looking tired, defeated and weighed down by life's stresses! When you talk to them there is a jaded tonality to their thoughts, there is cynicism about the world and relationships, and sometimes even a fed-up attitude towards everything. And then I look at children and see how the world should be viewed and how life should be lived and when I ask myself which of the realities I prefer for myself, the answer is obvious! I want to live the life of adult and take on its challenges, but to always view it with the heart and eyes of a child. Children are so easy to make happy. They jump with joy and flash the biggest smiles even at the sight of lollypop, but if you give an adult a gift and they'll barely manage a small smile with mumble of 'thank you' thrown in for good measure. Why do we stop expressing the joy we feel inside of us when we are given something that makes us happy? A child will rip open his present instantly, but an adult might even wait to get home from the party to open it, or wait for their guests to leave before doing so. Why do we lose our sense of curiosity and excitement, and if we feel it why the self imposed ban on expressing it? Children are outspoken and honest about their feelings, whereas adults are diplomatic to the point of suppressing their emotions and biting words that should be spoken. Hence children sleep fitfully and always have a positive energy charge, whereas adults tend to wallow in grief, fall prey to depression, toss restlessly at night and harbour resentments. This entire "what will people say" is a mantra most adults are victimised by and children could care less about. No matter how amazing it feels, adults will never laugh till they fall off chairs and roll on the ground holding their stomachs. They will never jump with wild abandon on a trampoline or deliberately make a milk moustache. They forget the essence of "fun" and "to play".

They might enviously watch others do it but frown and say, "How childish" and walk away. There is a big difference in being childish and childlike. Many adults unfortunately don't know the difference. They think it's all the same and distance themselves from any association because they either think, "people will frown at me or ridicule me", or "I'm grown up". My question is why did you grow up? Is your life filled daily with laughter, joy, excitement, wonder, trust, fun? Don't you want it to be?

Statistics tell us that children smile between 400-500 times a day, whereas adults barely make it to 20. If your life is not filled with smiles it's because you choose to see it through harsh eyes. I cannot tell you the excitement and fun I've had as a parent doing all the things I did as a kid, with my kids. Climbing into jungle gyms, going down slides and up on see-saws, running on the beach, rolling on the bed with laughter with my legs in the air, reading fairytale books, finger painting... the list goes on. I advocate this for all of you that don't know where to begin. Use your children or grandchildren to reconnect with what it is to be a kid again. The quality of your life is not determined by what happens to you, rather by your reaction to it. Children have enormous resilience and if anything goes wrong, rather than dwell on things, they are able to forget quickly and focus on something new that is deserving of their attention and time. The key word is exuberance. The synonyms of exuberance are enthusiasm, excitement, liveliness, energy, high spirits and cheerfulness. I'd like to add two attributes that are available in abundance in kids and almost always lacking in adults: Trust and imagination. There is a saying, "once bitten twice shy", but many adults are constantly on guard and fearful of being cheated and hurt. I say trust everyone till they prove you wrong. It's nice to be alert, but to live with constant mistrust amongst people that have never hurt you, because someone else in the past has, is a terrible waste of life, energy and makes for incredibly negative headspace. And lastly I keep myself open to the incredible power of imagination. Children create these amazing

worlds of fantasy, with superheroes, knights rescuing princesses, heroes duelling with monsters. They will spin yarns and conjure up endless stories that you know aren't true, but it's the same power of imagination and belief that makes for bright, creative minds and fantastic futures.

Somehow as adults, we content ourselves with a constant reality check on how boring, miserable, exhausting, pressuring and rut like our lives are, and we concede this is the way life has to always be. What nonsense! Let your inner child show you how to change realities. This doesn't mean you absolve yourself of all responsibilities or heartache. It just means you revel in your responsibilities because you chose to take them on, it means you learn from heartbreak about what you don't want in a relationship and with enthusiasm and bated breath look forward to your ideal life partner, rather than mope that you will never love again or be distrustful of your next relationship. It means being able to laugh wholeheartedly because you feel it and believe that the disdain of those that don't find happiness in your happiness isn't worth your concern anyway. It also means being selfish.

To take time out to do the things that matter and have meaning to you. It's your life, add your own dimensions. Live it to its fullest, with abandon, with curiosity, don't be afraid to ask questions or say you don't understand. Don't lose that twinkle in your eye or spring in your step. Smile constantly and be emotionally buoyant. To live life and see the world through the eyes of a child is to realise how simple it is to be happy, no matter what your reality. Why complicate it by being so overly adult?