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mind • body spirit

by Carmen Siering



Regrets, I've Had a Few

I recently celebrated a half-decade birthday, which to me seemed more difficult than any birthday in memory. Maybe it is because, at 55, I am decidedly in the middle of my 50s and well on my way to 60. Also, there is no way I am still middle age but something more than that, because, between you and me, I doubt I'll live to be 110.

My birthday worries reminded me of a bumper sticker I once saw. It read, "Age is simply an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter." Now before you start attributing this quote to Mark Twain or Jack Benny or someone else, I did my research and it is just one of those quotes that really can't be attributed to anyone in particular. But don't take my word for it; go ahead and spend an afternoon diving down internet rabbit holes. You won't come away satisfied.

The problem is, *I do* mind, so it *does* matter. I mind for several reasons, not the least of which is I feel I still have a lot to do and much less time in which to do it. One of my children is fond of saying we should live our lives without regret, but I can't say that I do. I have plenty of regrets, not the least of which is the time I've squandered on internet searches regarding quotation attributions.

To my dismay, it strikes me that I have traveled absolutely nowhere. It isn't that I haven't wanted to, but the fact is, I married young and had two children. Ten years later, I found myself a single mom in graduate school. Before I knew it, the kids were in college and I was still paying off my own student loans. It just seems back then there was never enough time or money to travel much beyond a couple of trips to the beach or Disney World. Now that I very nearly have enough money, I absolutely don't have the

time. And I've never been off this continent! See? Regrets. Happily, my husband and I are saving for a 25th anniversary trip to Europe. I hope the world is still in one piece in five years so we can go see it.

Another regret I have is how much of my life I have spent worrying about my physical appearance. As a feminist, this appalls me, but like everyone else, I'm a product of my culture. Still, you're never too old to see things differently. Because we're preparing to take another beach vacation, I found myself shopping for a swimsuit and to my surprise and delight, I found one that I like. I think the ease with which that happened was probably influenced by an internet meme I saw recently about how to get a bikini body. It was short and to the point: Get a bikini, put it on your body, and stop worrying about what anyone else thinks. That's a good attitude to have about most things. Just to be clear, I didn't buy a bikini.

I guess the real question isn't what do I regret but how do I live from here on out? Because, who knows—maybe I *will* live to be 110. Then again, life doesn't come with any guarantees.

What I've decided to do is fill my life with the things that bring me joy, and weed out the things that don't, whether they are material objects or obligations or people.

Maybe that is the blessing that comes with passing the more-than-halfway mark. Something like wisdom. If that's the birthday gift I got this year, then I have no regrets. ✨

Carmen Siering is Bloom's managing editor. A wife, mother, and grandmother, she has a Ph.D. in rhetoric and composition and is a professional writer and editor. Contact her at carmen@magbloom.com.