

TIME IS LIMITED, SO . . . FOLLOW YOUR HEART

by Rebecca Stanwyck, LCSW

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"Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. ... Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become."

--Steve Jobs, 2005 Stanford Commencement Address

A colleague emailed this quote last week, as we all reacted to news of the death of Steve Jobs, Apple's visionary founder and former CEO. I was struck by how much these words of wisdom describe my own journey to becoming a psychotherapist, and how well they speak to the value of psychotherapy for us all.

"Time is limited": When we're young it seems to stretch out before us like a Nevada highway, infinite and boring, as we count off the school years and birthdays like mile markers, anxious to get somewhere and to be somebody. At some point something will happen to startle us into a realization that time is finite: being put in a life-threatening situation, or the death of a loved one, or of a famous person who seemed larger-than-life, like Steve Jobs. This is often a time when people seek out a therapist, to help them process their grief or trauma, but also because they've awakened out of the "autopilot" mode, and may be ready to examine their life. Psychotherapy offers a safe and supportive place to do so.

"Living someone else's life": Each of us is born into a set of assumptions and expectations about who we are and who we will become, which is based on socio-economic class, race, ethnicity, culture, and gender, as well as the beliefs and experience of our parents and their parents. It's rare for someone to know clearly at a young age who they will become; most of us go through life either trying to please others and doing what's expected, or rebelling against it. Psychotherapy can help us to figure out who we really are.

"The noise of others' opinions": For some of us, it's quite a cacophony. Everyone around us seems to have opinions about what we should or shouldn't do, and when and where and with whom (because it's so much easier to focus on other people's lives than our own). Also, many people get "doing" and "being" confused, so when we're not *doing* what others want or expect, we're made to feel (or we assume that) who we *are* is the problem. Psychotherapists provide an objective and non-judgmental perspective.

"Your own inner voice": When's the last time you even heard it, let alone really listened to what it's trying to tell you? Do you have trouble recognizing your inner voice? Are you afraid to trust it? The process of psychotherapy can allow you to hear that inner voice more clearly, and over time, learn to trust it.

"Have the courage to follow your heart and intuition": Becoming who you're meant to be often requires going against the advice you've been given, and being willing to take risks and make mistakes. The path may be unmarked, and feel lonely or scary at times - your psychotherapist can support you in staying the course.

If you'd like to find out more about how psychotherapy can help your situation, contact me at:

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