



## Be a better you

*“Always be a first-rate version of yourself, instead of a second-rate version of somebody else”*

Judy Garland

I love a good quote. They can be incredibly inspirational.

Who do you aspire to be like? Is it based on that person's beauty, wealth, career success, parenting skills?

Wouldn't it be great if we all aspired to be a better version of ourselves?

A very good friend of mine recently came to a realisation. That however much she went to the gym and lifted weights (which she did at least 3 times a week), her arms would never be toned the way she wanted them to be. She accepted that 'I am how I am'. I accepted that about my legs a long time ago, although I have never exactly been a dedicated gym visitor!

However, what my friend realised gave her a huge sense of release. She also acknowledged that she naturally has something that thousands of us don't – *naturally* beautiful blonde hair!

I think this trap of comparing ourselves to what other people are doing and what other people have is one us mums fall into all too often.

“Have you seen Emma's new kitchen?” .... “I hear Clare and Douglas are off on *another* child-free holiday...!”

“So-and-so's child is a year younger than mine, and has already started tennis lessons” .... “my Lucy refuses to wear 'pretty' clothes and always looks like such a tomboy...”

We don't just compare ourselves to others, but also compare our children to others, which is even more unfair! And it is draining.

We fail to appreciate that we are all different and actually want different things from life. Some of us want to work and some of us love spending all our time with our children. Some of us are happy for the extra money that our partner's promotion brings, even if it means we see less of him.

So, firstly we need to work out "Who am I?" – what makes us unique and special?

One very enlightening way to find out more about ourselves is to identify our values – what is important to us. What we stand for.

When we know this, it is easy to see how some aspects of our lives may have become unmanageable. Because we are not living that part of our life in accordance with our values. There might be a personality clash at work which could be resulting from conflicting personal values. You may be frustrated as one of your values is health, yet you have no time to keep fit.

When we identify our own unique set of values, and start to try to live our lives more in accordance with those values, we are living an authentic life. A life that is more fulfilling, rewarding, and less draining.

I realised recently that, whilst I love going to the park to meet friends, or to friends' houses with my children, I spend a lot of time gossiping with the mums. On my days when I don't work, I plan to have 'quality time' with my children. Family is one of my top values.

I have realised that gossiping with my friends is not 'quality time', although it is fun, and is making me feel guilty (the topic of a whole other article...!). I now make an effort to do a couple of things a week with just my children, even if it means staying at home. The point is, it is just us. And it's great.

Remember, for all the people you look at and think they have perfect lives, there are also people who are looking at you in the same way. Noone has a perfect life – trust me.

What we *can* do is make the very most of the one we have, and enjoy being us.



So, if you're interested in all this, try this exercise:

- Spend some time working out your values. Ask yourself the questions, "What is important to me?" "What do I stand for?".
- Then ask yourself – am I living my life in accordance with those values? If not, work out things you can change to make sure that you do.
- Now, think of all the things you like about yourself, and all the wonderful things in your life already.
- Do the same for your children. Think of their great qualities that make them unique.

And finally, another great quote...

*"One just has to be oneself. That's my basic message. The moment you accept yourself as you are, all burdens, all mountainous burdens, simply disappear. Then life is a sheer joy, a festival of lights".*

Bhugwan Shree Rajneesh, Indian spiritual master

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