



## A message to my younger self

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The Bondholders have posed a question: if you knew then what you know now – what would you tell your younger self...?

What a great question.....

It takes me back to an event I attended recently with the Bondholders at Leeds University (back in those heady days where face to face dinner and drinks was a more normal occurrence...). This was a great evening for me for two reasons. Firstly, wonderful things were said about our region by the speakers – and as a former HR Director of KCOM and someone who has lived and worked in this area for many years – it filled me with immense pride that we were getting such great praise...just brilliant. However, secondly, and perhaps most importantly for me personally, it gave me opportunity to go back to Leeds University, my old student playground. A building I've not been back to since I graduated some twenty something years ago.....

It was an evening of mounting nostalgia from the moment I parked my car (in a swanky new multi-storey car park – just a yard of rubble in my day), retracing steps past my old English block (small terraced house reassuringly still the same) to the still full, still loud, student union. However, the memories reached a peak as I headed for a quick comfort break before dinner and found myself washing my hands, staring in a mirror I'd not looked in for 25 years...

It was a very different reflection staring back at me...the grey hairs and laughter lines (wrinkles...who am I kidding?!) were there to remind me of the passing years...but if I could turn the clock back – what would I say to that fresh faced English student? what would I say to that girl in the mirror now?

The advice was immediate....."Believe in Yourself".

So here I was answering the bondholder's question – several weeks before they asked it....

So is that the advice I'd offer to you now?

Maybe. But perhaps not.

You see everyone is wonderfully different - that's what makes us human. So what works for me might be the last thing you need. I'm often fighting that imposter syndrome that pops up for so many of us (actually 70% of the population.... if studies are to be believed) - so my advice would have been critical for me. But that might not be what you need....you might be fearlessly charging straight into battle as we speak, but missing the vital clues of advice that you would get if you paused a little and listened more generously to others....

So the advice I'd give you today is find your own mirror to look in....and instead of taking the years away - add on those grey hairs and wrinkles ....and then ask *yourself* the same question....what advice would *your* 45 year old self have for you today....? .....And what would a 90 year old version of you say back through your student mirror?

Because in a world where there are lots of leadership experts and coaches (and yes, I know I profess to be one of them!) - the best advice is often what lies deep, sometimes hidden, within ourselves. Your own voice has the ultimate power (we are the one person we can never leave in this life), so make sure you give your powerful self, the best version of you, the opportunity to speak up..

So look in that mirror, imagine the wrinkles and grey hair expanding, but equally the wisdom and intelligence mounting too - what would that person tell you? It might take a while to hear it properly....so keep listening, keep questioning and stay curious.....

And until you can see it clearly - you can borrow my reflection.....

Believe in yourself.

For in the words of the mind-bogglingly clever Brian Cox....."In the sheer scale and expanse that is the universe, the atoms in you only exist in you as they are for such a short time. Make them count".

There is only one you. Listen to it, nurture it and love it. Make it count.

Helen

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