

Irresponsibility Is the Youth-Killer

There's this myth in our culture that youth is a blank check to be irresponsible. "Have fun and cut loose a little," older folks tell us, not without a little envy.

But being young is not the opposite of being responsible. And to be carefree is not the same as to be irresponsible. In fact, irresponsibility is the youth-killer – the very reason that our older friends and family look and feel the part of the elderly before their time.

The 20 or 30 year-old who eats irresponsibly ("donuts! pizza!" etc.) becomes the overweight and chronically-ill 40 or 50-year old.

The 20 or 30 year-old who manages finances irresponsibly ("let's go out for margaritas every night!" etc.) becomes the 40 or 50 year-old with no retirement plan and debt which will outlive them.

The 20 or 30-year old who fails to take responsibility in work ("I just want to have a high-status job," etc.) becomes the corporate drone, the underachiever, or the sycophantic overachiever at 40 or 50.

The 20 or 30-year old who dates irresponsibly ("I'm just looking for a good time!") becomes the 40 or 50-year old with one or more divorces.

This should scare you very much.

Time goes quickly (as 20-somethings discover), and action inevitably seeks its consequences. If you would keep your youth, dump this idea that your youth gives you so much margin for error. You can make some mistakes, but you can't afford to live destructive lifestyles day-in and day-out.

Run like hell from people who want you to squander your youth with them.

Youth is a gift your parents' responsibility gives you at birth. It's a gift you only get to keep if you choose the path of responsibility. That path of responsibility is the only thing which maintains the attributes of youth which we (rightly) love: good health, strength, freedom, curiosity of mind, beauty.

These things we value take great work and great care. And they can last for a tremendously long time. There are 70-somethings running long distances and 80-somethings skiing down mountains. And you can be one of them.

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