

LL55- How has age changed your perspective on life?

Hi, I am Alvean Lyons, and I'm Doug Weiss, and this is Love Life.

Alvean:

I always love the ideas that surface in terms of conversation that we can have. And this one is interesting, I think, for lots of different reasons. The question that was posed to us is, how has age changed your perspective on life? What really matters now? And I think what's interesting about it is, you and I are at different places in our life. Of course, I'm 25 and you are 35. (Laugh) And so I think we might have very interesting perspectives about things.

So, I will ask you first. Now, after living a few decades, has your perspective about life changed? Can you tell the difference between how you view the world now at this point in your life versus how you used to? And has it shaped or affected in any way what you really think matters? What would you say?

Doug:

Well, it's a great question. But I want to be careful in saying that age and changes in our perspective are an ongoing process. How I felt in my 20s is not how I felt in my 30s, and then again, 40s or 50s. I don't necessarily come at this strictly from the perspective of my advanced age. How do you feel now about your life, this is just this age I am and how I feel, well I've got a little more experience. There's an old saying applied to work situations that there are some people who have 20 years on the job, one year, 20 times over, others have 20 years of experience; there's a difference. I think the difference has to do with whether you are an introspective, evaluatory person, and observe what you go through in your life internalizing experiences that then help shape and guide what goes on from that point forward. Or you aren't,

Let's be honest, there are people who have no interest in looking backwards at their lives. They don't necessarily learn a lesson from what they've been through. And as Santyana said, they are doomed to repeat that history. This sounds self-congratulatory, but I do think that I have learned things in the course of my life, and they've changed me. Sometimes I had to get hit upside the head a few times to drive the point home because of my own obstinacy or lack of situational awareness. But eventually, I learned some lessons about what I valued, what I wanted for myself, and how I wanted to operate in the world.

Today, I am more anxious about certain things in my life than I used to be and less anxious about others.

Alvean:

Like what? Well, on a day in day out basis, I am less anxious about the outcome of today. I am much more inclined to accept today with some degree of equanimity, knowing that as the day unfolds, good things may happen subjectively, bad things happen subjectively but there's more

to come and how I may feel about circumstance in the moment, is probably not important. I have learned that I need to step back and judge only as the situation unfolds, over time,

That's the less anxious part, and I think that's the wisdom of age of understanding that what you think is happening is not necessarily what's happening, that positive things happen in your life, or things that you perceive as positive happen, as well as things you perceive as negative. They don't necessarily end up being what you think they are at the time. And you need to give yourself the opportunity to determine what their true impact is on your life may be over time.

The things I'm more anxious about today are on behalf of the people around me. I'm more anxious about where our country's going, I'm more anxious about the welfare of my children and grandchildren. More anxious, not for myself, but for them, because they're inheriting this mess that we're leaving and it doesn't feel as if the mess is getting better it feels of the moment as if the mess is getting worse. That's the anxiety I have at the moment. It's about the next generation and a feeling of responsibility that I have individually and can I say generationally. Even if I didn't have children and grandchildren, I would feel this, I think, but I feel it even more acutely because I can put a face to it. I do have children

Alvean:

At the risk of sounding far less thoughtful, I will say that as I get older, my perspective has changed in the sense that I just don't buy into the hype anymore. I just don't believe it. Most of it is crap. I mean that the things that we think matter so much, the ways in which we kill ourselves to try to appear, in particular the ways in which people oversell their capabilities, their lifestyle, their moneythe list goes on and on. Most of it is kabuki theater. That is what I figured out at this point. I realized that if I can spend far less time paying attention to what's going on around me and a whole lot more paying attention to what's going on inside of me instead, that I can create my own reality. I create the life that I live.

That's not to say that there aren't things that happen to us. But so much more of life is how we react to those things. The human side of it all. I have a quote that I absolutely love. And I've said it before: it's by Bishop TD Jakes who says that the ship does not sink because of the water that it sits inside, it sinks because of the water that gets inside of it. What happens around us is not nearly as important as what happens inside of us. And we spend so much time in our youth focused outwardly, you know, comparing ourselves to the next person, whether or not we measure up, whether our relationship looks as pretty, as exciting, as sexy as the next person. These things mean nothing when it's all said and done. You yourself need to be comfortable inside of your own skin, comfortable inside of the love that you share with your partner, comfortable inside of the life that you have built. You alone have the power to change. So, I really care a lot less about things defining me. I used to love the labels and the externals. and now much prefer stock options, landscaping and crown molding.

I don't really want any of those things. If we can create something more with an asset, and I mean that in both its literal and it's emotional, spiritual sense. If something is not able to add to my life or to the life of others, then I just don't the value. As you know, I'm the mother of a child

who is a juvenile diabetic. And my son has been diagnosed since he's four. And he is 17 now and it has made me very aware of mortality, the importance of valuing and taking care of oneself, and how everything stems from our health. And by health, I mean both emotional, physical, and spiritual health. That's at the center of everything. If you're not taking care of that, you have nothing else. It doesn't matter how much money you have, it doesn't matter how many accomplishments you have, all of that stuff is fleeting if you don't have the Foundation, which is concrete, your health on each of those levels. He makes me very aware of those things. And I wish for him that he didn't have a single day of diabetes, but I would not take a single one of those days out of my life personally, if there was a way for me to maintain the lessons learned from that experience while absolving him of the experience. I wish I could do that. I wouldn't want to change it in me, it made me a better person but I would love to spare him the challenges that it has created in his life although I do think it made him a better young man. He loves in his heart and with values in ways that your average 17 year old wouldn't.

Doug:

Well that's life writing in his book. We start out work with an empty diary. There's nothing, we are displaying blank pages until we have our life experiences and the chapters get written. Those experiences allow us to begin a process of discernment, begin a process of deciding what enriches us, what pulls us down, what things we enjoy, what things we don't, and what things have lasting value. Maybe this is a superficial analogy but I'm going to go with it anyway. Years ago, when I was young man, I got interested in learning about wine. A fellow who owned a wine shop near me, said I'll teach you. He let me try things, and in the beginning, I had no idea what to make of my experiences. He could have given me a jug of junk wine and great wine and I would not have known the difference. It took years for me to develop a palate and be able to know the difference. But he was smart enough to tell me to just focus on what I liked, and why I liked it, just to describe and evaluate the experience.

We don't know what something might mean to us, what an experience might be, how we may feel about something until we've experienced it, and only then we can begin the process of trying to place some evaluation against it. In the process of evaluation, that discernment is what matters. What happens as you progress is that you learn to avoid the things that don't fill you with joy, that that aren't at the end of the day fulfilling, and to do the things that are. Knowing which is which requires some time and thought, it's not just a visceral reaction.

Alvaen:I'm with you on that. So if you were to say, if you could encapsulate the greatest truth today, just for today, what would you say it was?

Doug:

Now I am really on the spot. I think would be that if you can have relationships with other people that allow you to be the best person you are capable of being, and can be comfortable inside your own skin, then you've achieved something that is rare, incredibly valuable, and arguably the greatest achievement of your life. It is never what you accomplish, to quote the poets, those things will be written over by the shifting sands and be blown away, but the exchange of love with another human being, the creation of a bond with

another human being that is meaningful to both of you and builds something that didn't exist before, that is the greatest truth.

Alvean:

Well, mine would be live your life so that people don't have to lie at your funeral.

Doug:

And there you go, folks. Another brilliant observation.

Come back next week for more of this. We want to thank Kamaria Mason, our producer, and Todd Washburn, our recording engineer, they are a part of what makes this show work along with you, our audience, who feed us your ideas and thoughts and questions. So please feel free to write us at Alvean@lovelife.digital or Doug@lovelife.digital

Until next week, by folks.