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Average is Extraordinary: How Your Life Is Anything But Mediocre

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Introduction

Average is extraordinary. But, how could that be? If average is extraordinary, then what is above-average? I realize it doesn't seem true at first glance. I didn't believe it, either, because that would mean all the effort you and I have been putting into achieving our goals and dreams would be wasted, right?

And if average is as good as it gets, that would suck because you don't want to settle for average.

Neither do I.

And you are working hard to create an amazing life and average just doesn't seem to best describe it. Why would you work so hard for only average?

I want more than an average life, too.

The trouble is, most of us are average, and we are fighting against it every day: striving, sweating, dieting, reading, studying, primping, and prodding. We are expending so much effort and focus on how we could be more.

And we know better than to try to live up to the ideals. We know better than to compare ourselves to supermodels and famous people. We are above self-loathing.

But...a part of you still looks at the beauty magazines and berates your thighs. A part of you wants to move mountains, but you only seem to be pushing pebbles. And a part of you still wants your name in lights (or at least to be somewhat recognized), even though your Instagram posts are liked only by a few close friends and family.

We are spending so much energy and effort fighting to be anything but our current selves.

I am tired of the fight. So, I decided to write the Average is Extraordinary Manifesto. This manifesto is my line in the sand (and it can be yours, too) to say, "From this day forward, I will not only embrace my average life. I will see it as extraordinary!"

When I really think about it, an average life is already extraordinary. You are a perfect miracle of biology with one-of-a-kind characteristics. You are here in this thrilling time to be alive, and there is no one just like you. You have stories worth sharing, stories of triumph and stories of heartbreak. You have had a combination of experiences no one else has had. You see the world through your own unique lens, and you have gifts and talents that are distinct only to you.

The only reason we think we are merely average is because our culture fills our heads with visions of unicorns and anomalies. Our culture wants us to keep on shopping and striving because our economy demands it. And we buy the dream that if we only try a little harder, we, too, can be unicorns. But guess what? If it were up to only effort, there would be plenty of unicorns. Let's not forget that all that effort and focus is being directed towards what is 'wrong' with you. That is a sad way to live.

Most of us will never be the tiny minority of 'perfection', according to our culture, and we could spend our entire lives aiming for that and never achieve it. The world has such a narrow definition of beautiful, it has a one-size-fits-all prescription for the achievement of success, and it continually tells you that your happiness is just past that next milestone (and credit card purchase).

What if we stopped measuring ourselves by the world's yardstick? What if we pursued our own dreams and not the dreams we have been fed by this culture? What if we decided our lives are extraordinary just as they are?

This manifesto is my reminder to stop striving for the world's goals and dreams. It is filled with touchstones that are my mental prompts to end my feelings of lack and get on with living. It is my warning siren to cease resenting my average life. It can be yours, too.

I want us to rejoice in the journey of our lives. Let's set wild goals that we dream up without the world's help...and be happy whether we reach them or not. Let's see our lives as extraordinary in their everyday ordinariness. I deserve it. You deserve it, too.

As you go through this manifesto, I want you to be kind to yourself. This is not a tool so that you go and make another list of things you should do. This is a tool to look inside yourself and find some truth. Sure, you might find a dream or two hidden in there that you want to reach, but don't flog yourself to achieve them. Let them unfold as you see fit. Let each step from this day forward wind and meander towards the things you love and need, with awareness and with wonder.

Your average life is extraordinary right now. Just as it is. Let's celebrate!

About Kirsten

Kirsten could best be described as an entrepreneur with a big heart and a curious mind. Her curious mind has led her through careers in biology, retail management, community foundations, business consulting, puzzle creation, organizing, event planning, carpentry, and more. She has over 20 years experience in business management, customer service, and team facilitation.

This business acumen skill set is coupled with the equally interesting journey of her big heart. She has explored a heart-centered transition from the corporate sector to the nonprofit sector, from entrepreneurship to social entrepreneurship, and from a bottom line (profit) focus to a triple bottom line (people, planet, profit) focus.

All of these experiences have shaped her unique view of the world, one of bringing meaning and purpose to the business world and creating a life sparked by feeling and experimentation. Now, as an author, she is sharing her unique viewpoint on her regular blogs at kirstenwreggitt.com and through her memoir Before I Let You Go: Stories for My Grown Son.

How To Use This Manifesto

Throw away your measuring stick (more on this later). This is not a program with rigorous exercises, and it is not another thing to add to your to do list. This is quiet time reading. Think of it as a sunny porch companion. It is something to read by the fire on a cold winter night, or something to pack for a plane ride. I want you to dig in but I want you to do so with gentleness and space.

This manifesto is my attempt to capture a few touchstones to help remind me that I am living an extraordinary life. They are not meant to be a prescription on how to live but are a reflection about how I have lived and want to live. I share them with you to give you a starting point in finding your own touchstones for your extraordinary life.

FREE Touchstone Exploration Guide

I am so happy to announce that I have created a free Touchstone Exploration Guide for anyone who wants to go beyond just reading the manifesto. It is a series of reflection questions for each and every manifesto touchstone. These questions allow you to get out your pen and notebook and really think about what each of these touchstones means to you. You deserve to take some time for yourself and reflect. Get your free "go deeper" questions right here.

Before You Begin

I want you to rest, reflect, and renew. I want you to use your time with the Average is Extraordinary Manifesto to listen to that quiet voice that is often hard to hear: the small voice is the part of you worth getting reacquainted with, to get grounded again. So many of us hear our quiet, small voices best when we take notes, doodle, and journal. Grab your Touchstone Exploration Guide but also treat yourself to a new notebook or journal so you can record your thoughts as they arise. Make it special by using your favorite pen or pencil, changing into some comfy clothes, putting on your music, and finding that secret spot nearby that lets you relax and be yourself. This is time just for you. Enjoy!

Touchstone 1: Embrace the Average

My girlfriend and I decide to meet and head to the local mall on Saturday. I need some new jeans, a couple of tops, and a pair of everyday shoes. I pick her up in my Subaru Forester, and we drive from our suburban neighbourhood over to the mall. When we park, I have to pay special attention to what row we are in as there is a sea of other SUV's in the parking lot.

We join the crowds in the mall and people watch a bit. There are teenagers wearing trendy clothes who are hanging around giggling and checking themselves in every mirror. There are frazzled looking moms pushing baby carriages heading into the department stores. And then there are people like us - not quite frumpy, but not fully put together, either, who are carrying coffees and taking their time.

We walk down the mall looking for stores that match our tastes and budgets. I lean towards comfort and affordability, and she does, too. Half of the mall is a bit too upscale for us (or the clothes are too young and revealing) but eventually, we find a few stores that carry the middle-of-the-road quality, styling, and pricing. Our taste is fashion fit for the middle-class, middle-aged woman.

We won't stand out in our new outfits, but our simple clothes give us the comfort and space we need to show up. They might just even be the 'uniforms' of the average. We aren't dressed to impress. We are dressed to get on with the work of our lives, and *that* is extraordinary in the ordinary.

I shop at Reitman's, but I still wonder if I will ever shop at Holt Renfrew. I drive a Subaru, but I still wonder if I will I ever drive a

Porsche. I live in a middle-class neighbourhood, wear a size 14, and make a middle-class income. I am the quintessential North American average woman in the fullest sense of the word, yet I am so discontented with my life that it is all consuming. Why?

My favorite outfit is a pair of jeans and a plaid shirt because I feel most like me when I'm wrapped in woodsy clothes that feel comfortable. I am not a girly girl. My favorite pastime is taking a walk outside or digging in my garden because nature soothes me and brings me back to my childhood and myself. My favorite memories are of family camping trips and quiet times together where we had no distractions from creating connection to each other. No flashing lights and big city attractions for this girl. I have average clothes, average pastimes, and average memories but they are all authentically me.

There is nothing earth-shattering or extravagant in my life. I'm not famous, nor have I experienced anything really newsworthy. I've had no near-death experiences, no exotic world travels, no failed marriages or horrible losses. What is extraordinary about that?It is only once you look at my life at a personal level, without comparison to others, that you can see the extraordinary in the ordinary. I have had profound experiences that changed my viewpoints on life and what I thought was true. I have achieved my own impossible dreams: overcoming my own limitations. I have climbed my own metaphorical Mount Everest and triumphed with wonder at my own determination.

You have also.

Our lives are extraordinary when you look at them as the unique grains of sand that they are, not in contrast to the dunes that they find themselves within. I don't want us to miss the beauty of our lives with our eyes always on what is missing instead of what is already here. You can see yourself as a lowly one-in-seven-billion or you can see yourself as the miraculous *one* in seven billion!

We matter. What we do matters. Through our average lives, we impact those around us, we make headway in our own unique journeys, and we pave the path for beautifully average people to come after us.

We can't all be famous, or 'stinking' rich, or on the cover of every magazine. But we can blossom where we are planted, shining like the little lights we are, and make a difference to the few who matter most to us. Somehow we think that just because we haven't become famous or sensational that we haven't lived. But we're wrong. We were meant to have the exact lives we do. We were meant to eat oatmeal, drive SUVs, and wear a size 12 or 14. We were meant to live in suburbia, work 40 hours a week at a job we don't really love or hate, and have family over on the weekend for a bbq.

It is this exact averageness that allows us to be truly extraordinary in our own ways. If we embrace the average, we can stop focusing on the gaps in our lives and instead find gratitude and happiness with what is. We can pursue our dreams without desperation but instead with wonder. And we can dig deep into our own souls with acceptance and love and share meaning with the other average people we come into contact with.

Embracing the average is the foundation for extraordinary. It is ours for the taking.

It is my hope for you that you learn to embrace the average. Stop with the disappointment. Stop with the comparisons. Wear your average as a badge of honour. My uniform of averageness allowed me to show up at my desk in comfort. And somehow - extraordinarily - sit long enough to finish my first book. May your uniform allow you to show up for your extraordinary life, too.

Touchstone 2: Use What You Have

The alarm is going off. It is 4:45am. My eyes don't want to open, and I can barely lift my leadened arm out from under the blankets to turn the alarm off. I groan and sigh. Maybe I should just pull the covers up and snuggle in for another hour? But something in the deepest part of me coaxes me out of bed, and soon, I am sitting in my office writing at 5am. I am trying to get my first book written, 675 words at a time. I only have this small window of time each day to write my book because at 6am I need to get up from my computer, shower, and go to work. After 6am, my day is filled with other priorities.

My book is important to me. It is one of those things that I want to do before I die. There will probably be no accolades and awards for it, but I want to bring it into the world, anyway. It is a grueling schedule of getting my words down on paper each day. Day after day.

Fitting it into my life is hard, and there are other roadblocks, too. There is a fear that overtakes me some days and stops me from putting any words on the page. What if my book sucks? Do I really have anything worth writing about? Another roadblock is my need for sleep; staying committed to the 5 am alarm is hard. And there is the hurdle of the unfamiliar. I have never done this before, and my lack of knowledge about how to write a book seems insurmountable at times. It would be easier to not try.

But then I think, *This is my Mount Everest*, and a sense of deep determination washes over me.

Time is so short.

I need to leave this book behind.

It will only come to be by putting down one word and then another.

That little phrase "climb your Everest" builds the strength in me needed to keep going. Even if my book is not a best seller (and the odds show that is most likely true), I still want to write. You might want to paint, or speak in front of audiences, or get a promotion, or help a neighbour, or build a canoe, or some other amazing, wonderful use of your gifts and talents. That is what shifts an average life to extraordinary. You living your life, not waiting for perfection. You climbing your own Everest, whatever that looks like.

We cannot all be supermodels or famous actors. *Thinking as much is a good argument for there already being too many.* The world needs you to take the talents you have and use them for their greatest expression. Be the greatest mom, the best barista, the finest editor, the unparallelled knitter….these are extraordinary talents. These are Everests worth climbing. Climb yours!

My wish for you is that you embrace your talents and reach beyond your fears and roadblocks to share your gifts with the world. "Climb your Everest."

Touchstone 3: It is Only About Your Journey

My dad loved to swim long distances, but my mom was never comfortable with him swimming out into the middle of the lake alone. He was hard to see out there, and boaters could accidentally hit him. He was also so far from shore and in deep water that if he needed help he was too far out to rescue quickly. So, to appease my Mom, he asked me to take the canoe alongside him and paddle it while he swam. I was about 14 and not a very experienced canoeist, but if my Dad thought it was okay, I was ready for the challenge.

We had a big heavy canoe, the kind that took superhuman strength to lift and half a lake to turn around. It wasn't exactly an easily maneuvered craft but it was sturdy. When we set out from the beach that day, the water was calm. Dad pushed me by hand out into water deep enough for me to paddle and where he could no longer touch bottom and had to swim. I managed to stay alongside Dad and not hit him with the canoe or my paddle. A few times he had to duck but nothing serious. Half an hour or so later we turned around to come back to shore and that was when the wind came up. I had paddled out sitting in the back of the canoe. With me in the back, the front of the canoe was elevated slightly out of the water and the wind pushed the front of the canoe around no matter how hard I paddled. I was soon being blown farther away from Dad and heading outside of the beach area towards a rocky cove. The wind was moving the canoe fast.

Dad looked up and shouted at me to paddle harder. No matter how hard I pulled, I barely made up for the wind pushing the canoe out of

line. He saw me struggling and yelled for me to move to the front of the canoe instead. So I did. Bending over with my paddle across the gunnels, I took the slow steps over the cross beams and finally to the front seat. The time it took me to move from the back to the front had left the wind time to push me further into the rocky cove. I could see huge boulders rising up from the lake bottom and the rocky shore was fast approaching. I was so afraid that I would hit the boulders and tip over or worse, crash my Dad's canoe into the rocky shore.

My heart raced and I was next to tears. I had no choice but to do everything I could. I began to paddle from the front of the canoe. I even knelt down in the bottom to get as much purchase as I could. I pulled long, determined strokes with all the might I could muster as a frightened 14 year old girl. Dad was standing in shallower water now and watching me, though he could do nothing more than yell instructions.

I dug in. Slowly I managed to maneuver the canoe against the wind. I out-paddled the gusts blowing me into the cove, and I came back in line with the beach even though it was a slow process. I did it using my own power. I did something I didn't think I could. I overcame a situation with nothing more than my own power.

Here I am at 45 years old remembering that event from over 30 years ago. Why? Because in that moment, I did something hard, something I didn't know if I actually had the ability to do. I came face to face with my own power. That success is deeply logged into my memory. And you probably have had experiences just like this.

To a strong canoeist, this scenario seems rather unexceptional. You running a few miles after working for months to get there...that would seem unremarkable to an ultra-marathoner. But it isn't about them! It is about you.

We need to see our accomplishments in the context of our own lives. It is so important for us to take notice of times we overcome something profoundly difficult in our own lives and celebrate. We learn who we are and what we are made of in those moments. It is the profound

sense of accomplishment that gives us confidence in our abilities...even 30 years later.

Our own journey is what allows us to see our lives as extraordinary. Our own challenges require us to push our limits and stretch ourselves. Every one of us is on a remarkable journey, even if our stories of success cannot be compared. What remains the same is the truth at every one of us has a story of extraordinary power - even if we are journeys look average.

My hope for you that you don't look at your accomplishments against anyone else's. Your journey is special. Your successes are extraordinary. Use your power, and paddle your own canoe. You will be surprised by what you can overcome, a far cry from mediocre.

Touchstone 4: Shed the Shoulds

I am standing on my yoga mat in one of my first yoga classes ever. I am so self-conscious in my tight yoga pants and top. There are perfect bodies everywhere I look, and those same bodies are repeated again and again in the mirrors that fill the front of the studio. I try hiding my reflection behind the woman standing in front of me.

The class begins, and I struggle. I cannot do a full push up into downward facing dog. I cannot balance easily in tree pose. I cannot twist enough, breathe enough, hold enough, or focus enough. I look around and wish that I was better. As though the teacher could hear my thoughts, she welcomes us into a seated posture with, "Yoga is not happening on anyone else's mat. It is happening on your mat, in your body. Meet yourself where you are. Do not look around in comparison, look only inward at yourself."

It was not a competition. I was not there trying to measure up or be "the best in the class." I was there to meet myself, limitations and all. I could twist enough for now, breathe enough for now, hold enough and focus enough - for now. Right here. Right now, I was enough.

Yoga is just one example of places we might look around and compare ourselves. Our world trains us to compete on everything: better grades, slimmer bodies, more money, nicer cars, and more luxurious vacations. We are measuring ourselves against so many other people, and the list of 'shoulds' begins. But we are uniquely us, and they are uniquely them. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with you or where you are now. This is not a race. There are no winners. There are only people who embrace their lives and live extraordinarily in the circumstances they

have.

We need to get our eyes back on our own mats.

Our world is filled with messages about all the ways we need to change. We are told how to look, what to wear, what to buy, what success looks like, how to improve ourselves, and how to love. We are sold a single definition of success that is filled with money and prestige, titles and fame, and beauty and luxury. The list of shoulds begins - I should work out more, I should eat better, I should live in a bigger house, and on and on.

I have tried on all the ideals that world has sent my way, and made the lists of shoulds. Now I choose to let them all go. I am leaving the messages of how I am not enough behind and I am filling my to-do list with dreams and goals, not shoulds. I am looking inward for my own definition of success acknowledging my own unique talents. I will no longer sacrifice my self-esteem to live up to the world's expectations.

I am embracing my whole self, just the way I am right now. I want to live a life in which I learn to love all of me including the not so perfect parts. They are who I am. And I am enough right now.

You deserve to embrace your whole self from head to toe. You deserve to define your own success in all its originality or in all its commonness. The world doesn't have your best interest at heart. The messages our world sends us are sales messages. The world wants to sell you something, and in order to sell you something, it has to make you feel like there is a gap in your life. To the world, it is all about the "You should…"

Ignore those feelings of lack because they are a mirage. You can stop using the messages of the world to write your resolutions, to-do lists, and quarterly goals. You can stop flogging yourself for not being the ideal they have painted for you. Shed the shoulds.

My hope for you is that we go forward living our lives by our own definitions of success. May we measure ourselves by our own yardsticks, love our whole selves including every part - the perfect and

the not so perfect. We are enough.

Touchstone 5: Doing Less Is More

I stare at the piles of paper on my desk. There is just so much to do. I hear my husband come up the stairs. "Are you coming to bed?" he asks.

I look at the pile of work, and my chest squeezes. I begin to cry. "There's too much to do," I manage to squeak out between sobs.

"But you are so tired. What are you really getting done at this time of night?" he asks.He is right. I have been spinning my wheels. No matter how many hours I put in, the piles of work are not getting any smaller. I am making silly mistakes. I am forgetting things. I have caught myself, more than once lately, just staring at the computer screen not doing anything.

I am depleted.

The next morning, after some much needed rest, I spend some time working productively, but a few hours later, I find myself staring again. I am not getting anywhere. Fighting against every Type A "I can push through this" bone in my body, I get up from my desk, put on my running shoes, and go for a walk. I live just minutes from a full view of the Rocky Mountains. There is a walking path there that winds along the top of a cliff overlooking the river below and the mountains beyond. I walk for twenty minutes. I can feel my mind clearing. My breath moves out of the top part of my chest and deep into my belly again.

It takes days of deliberate pauses such as this to regain a hold on things and bring my focus back. The workload doesn't change, but my ability to handle it does. I make fewer mistakes, I notice my surroundings, I find a bit more joy in the everyday.

Being depleted is so common these days. You have probably been depleted, too. We are pushing ourselves so hard, and we are so busy there is no white space in our calendars. Eventually, some of us might even reach the point that it is hard even just getting out of bed. We don't have any focus...or joy... left. We can't imagine making a meal for ourselves, let alone for our families and we have scheduled ourselves right into exhaustion.

Many of us know that busy is no longer in vogue. Busy is a distraction from our lives, but we don't know what would happen if we slowed down. We can start by creating the space to rejuvenate, except many of us don't really know how. Each of us gets our energy from something or somewhere, and some of us haven't quite figured out what those sources are. We need to discover what things can plug us back in and get our energy stores revved up again. We need to find our fuel, and our fuel often involves doing less.

For some of you, the greatest source of energy could be a deep connection with nature. As long as you can get outside, to a little piece of the wild, you are able to restore yourself. You are fed by sunlight, trees, water, flowers, or oceans. You enjoy watching sunsets, sunrises, birds and bees, or the swaying of trees in the breeze. Nature jazzes you back up. Your doing less is getting outside.

For some of you, the greatest energy returns when you spend time with others. A lively conversation or a quiet connection over coffee with someone else brings a spark back to your life. You need laughter and communion, you need community and crowds, and you need friendships and mutual interests. You are fed by relationships in all their various forms and really fuel up in the presence of others. Your doing less is time spent with great company.

Maybe you are like the final group who is most fueled by the time spent alone. Reading a good book, going for a long solitary walk, meditation, writing, tinkering, or just watching a good movie rebuilds your energy. You need time alone to catch your breath, process your thoughts, reground yourself, and spend some quality time in reflection.

You are fed by your own company and need time alone to regain your vibrancy. Your doing less is time with yourself.

Each of us must work at doing less. We need fuel for this busy life. If we are depleted we cannot thrive or serve. Extraordinary is not someone who is depleted.

My hope for you is that you find your fuel through your own unique way of doing less and give yourself permission to fuel up and re-energize for the journey ahead. We need you at full power, living your extraordinary life!

Touchstone 6: Belonging Over Popularity

I can't put my finger on it but there is something that stops me from sharing everything with that friend. I don't tell her all my hopes and dreams. I don't share my fears. I just talk about the easy stuff, the fluffy stuff, and the less important stuff. I've been burned before. She has laughed at my dreams before, and it knocked me down a bit.

I didn't realize how much it affected me when I shared with her. I needed the contrast of other friends to really see it. I had other friends who made my dreams seem possible. I had other friends who lifted me up and gave me hope. When I got home from seeing her, I always felt a little less extraordinary. Was that really a friend?

I decided that I didn't want to only share the superficial with my friends. I decided that I wanted to surround myself with people who embraced the whole me and who genuinely supported me in my dreams, not someone who was waiting to tear me down. I wanted and needed a circle of belonging; a group of people who shared my extraordinary view of life and who weren't an anchor weighing down my dreams.

It took a little while, but I found them.

To live extraordinary lives we need to live with wonder and awe even in our everyday moments. We need to dream wild dreams and have hope in the possibility of the future. It is not always easy to do! We need people around us who dream as wildly as we do. We can't surround ourselves with people who only drag rain clouds into our moments. Even though we can't always see the world through rose-coloured glasses, we can choose to not always see only the dark side of things.

Focusing on the negative is robbing ourselves of the extraordinary things that exist in our lives daily. Instead, we need people who make us feel like we belong, who live with hope, and who see possibility!

Your circle doesn't have to be big, one or two people in your circle of belonging is enough. These are the friends you can tell everything to. These are the friends rooting for your success as much as they are rooting for their own. This is the circle where you can be your whole self unapologetically. This is where you belong and where your average life is far from extraordinary.

My hope for you is that you find a precious few people to build your circle of belonging. Dream together, rise together, and live extraordinary average lives together.

Touchstone 7:Tiny Impact Ripples

I was a Girl Guide leader for about four years. I saw the faces of bright eyed innocent 12-14 year old girls come and go. They earned badges, pitched tents, cooked meals, and built friendships. There were the sporty girls, the popular girls, the pretty girls, and the crafty girls. As leaders, we planned activities, booked campgrounds, filed forms, and created the best possible experiences for each of them. I don't remember many of them eighteen years later, but I remember one.

She was a quiet introspective girl. She was not athletic and not overly popular, but not unpopular either. She could fade into the background quite easily, but if she was called upon, she always had something relevant to share. I saw myself in her and made sure to sit near her around the campfire or at dinner.

I didn't do anything special, but I talked with her about my own experiences and connected with her as much as I could. After the few years of Guides, she moved on and as we were saying good-bye her mom came up to me. She said "Thank you, you have made such a difference in my daughter's life over the past few years."

I didn't save a life. I didn't deliver a rousing speech to thousands of people. I didn't solve anti-gravity. I merely showed up to my local Girl Guide group and spent time with some girls and offered them what I could of myself. Creating that tiny impact was enough, especially for one of them.

My average life was extraordinary in that moment. I made an impact on one life and that is enough. We don't need to change the world for millions. Our work is to create an impact where we can, how we can,

with what we already have. The tiny impacts others have had on me have made me want to spread that love and support. Tiny impacts ripple. Extraordinary lives are not about impacting large numbers of people, they are about making the lives of those we come into contact with better. And if we only make the life of one other person better, we have done our part.

May your all our ripples create lovely waves of impact on this world.

Touchstone 8: Be Courageously Curious

I got a job selling shoes out of necessity. We needed the money. I was embarrassed that after all my education I was working retail. I could have done that without my schooling but I soon grew to enjoy it. I was intrigued with the internal education programs and I started to map out the hierarchy of promotions. Within a year of starting in the shoe department I asked to become a Management Trainee, even though our store had never had one before. And from there, I became a manager opening a new store and then a manager in a large city.

It wasn't luck and it wasn't my skills that made that happen. It was my curiosity. I bravely looked around at my surroundings and got interested. How do things work here? This is interesting, I wonder if there is more? And all that question asking and paths of inquiry led me to discover opportunity.

As children we see everything and as adults we often miss too much. We forget how to be curious thinking that we have seen pretty much all the world has to offer. We are wrong. There are layers and layers of paths of inquiry to follow. We just have to catch the beginning spark of one and see where it leads. Curiosity opens us up to the awe and wonder around us. We notice the journey and discover new things about the world and ourselves.

What you may find does not have to be radical and abnormal but stepping out of the ordinary way you think about the world is an extraordinary exploration. We need to play with stuff, try stuff, muck around with stuff; no fear, no worry about the outcome, no analysis paralysis. We need the courage to try and fail; courage to follow our

curiosity into the crazy places it might take us.

It is our curiosity that will lead us to bring more meaning and purpose and passion into our lives. Curiosity asks questions, digs deep into subjects, and lights the path for us to explore. If we follow curiosity we learn what excites us and what brings us joy and meaning but it takes bravery to follow that curiosity.

It is not always convenient or comfortable to step out into newness and dig around in places that you are not used to going. And yet, I believe you are curious for a reason! As humans we seek to understand and we have an amazing capacity to solve mysteries of the world. Why? is one of the first questions kids ask. We just want to know! Trust that and go with that. Join the dance class, try the speaking gig, read the book, and watch the documentary. At the end of your curiosity you will find more things to follow up on. Our curiosity rarely disappoints, so explore, despite any fear and discomfort.

While you are exploring, notice the world you uncover with surprise and wonder. So often we just let life pass by and spend too much time in our heads planning the future and working on problems. We don't notice the wonder of life around us. It is in wonder that we get curious and it is following this curiosity that we find wonder. Let the two create energy and feed the journey.

May you never tire of following your curiosity. An average life is extraordinary in those moments of wonder and amazement. Be courageously curious, the rewards are worth it.

Touchstone 9: Extraordinary is Ordinary

I am sitting on a park bench in the sunlight. It is an autumn day and the warmth of the sun feels good on my skin. A cool breeze rustles through the trees plucking bright yellow leaves from the branches and ushering them along to their winter resting places. I hear a flock of birds chattering as they land in a nearby tree. They are gathering together getting ready to migrate to warmer places. I catch the scent of spicy leaves and moist soil in the air and I am transported back to every fall I have experienced before this one. I am grateful for these little things. It is no wonder Thanksgiving is an autumn celebration. Life is extraordinary.

They say the best things in life are free. Believe it. It is so hard to remember that as we are busy, we are striving, and we are working to reach the next summit. But right here, you have extraordinary at your fingertips, and it is completely ordinary. It is outside your door in nature. It is beside you in the warm smile of a loved one. It lives through you in your experience of colour, music, smells, and tastes. We are alive, and that is extraordinary all in itself!

If you were a unicorn and achieved some level of greatness (according to the world), the same extraordinary things would be available to you. There is no guarantee that you would find greater happiness or joy as a unicorn than you have available to you right now. It is our gratitude and attention that makes the simple things in life extraordinary.

My wish for you is that you take notice of the "free" things in life and don't wait for some future milestone to enjoy them. We already have

the extraordinary around us, we just have to see it.

Conclusion

Average really is extraordinary. We can find it in the impact we have on others, even it is only one - because one is enough. We can find extraordinary in the Everests we each climb, using our gifts, and staying courageously curious. Our average lives are filled with extraordinary things when we consider the circles of belonging we have and are grateful for the free things. We already are enough and we can stop striving for the empty ideals of the world. We simply need to take notice and our lives are anything but ordinary.

Next Steps

Thank you for reading my manifesto. I hope you enjoyed it. If you haven't already, please pick up your free Exploration Guide to take your thinking on these phrases a little deeper. Click here for your FREE Exploration Guide.

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