

As I sit and contemplate what to write for the most important “Law of Life” to me, I struggle to find an answer. Many cliches scramble through my mind: “Be true to yourself”, “Treat others the way you want to be treated”, “Be a leader and not a follower”, “Get the most out of life”, and finally, “Be the best you can be”. I started thinking more in depth about which one of the cliches was most important to me; I have realized that the two most important ones to me are “Be a leader and not a follower” and “Be the best you can be”.

As a young child I was always happy. Life seemed so carefree back then. I thought I would always have the same friends, go to the same school and people would always be happy, just like me. As I got older, I realized that life wasn't as easy as I thought in the past. People change and I too was going to change.

Throughout my life I have pondered over many questions. Will I make it through life? Will people like me for me? Will I accept myself? I was always a follower. If my friends said jump, then I would. If my friends said laugh then I did. I had many friends and enjoyed school but I noticed that I lacked something in myself that I had never really thought of before. I felt like a piece of myself was not there; it was adrift from some part of the world. The piece of me that was missing was my self-confidence.

I was raised in an average home. I had two parents and an older sister. My life was good. Later, I noticed that I was watching others and trying to fit in. I started to act differently. I thought that if I acted like everybody else, I would fit in just fine. Therefore, I could be just like the rest of my friends. I wanted to be accepted by others, but most of all I wanted to accept myself.

When I started high school things changed. I was not ready for change. Just when I thought my life was coming together and that I had mastered how to act around my friends, I had to change again. This time for a larger group in a larger school. I was not ready to make that step. I was used to putting myself down in front of people and even when I just thought about myself. I would say things like ‘I'm going to fail’, ‘I am stupid’, ‘I am ugly’. I was tired of always being so negative instead of being positive, but I just couldn't stop. I was depressed on the inside, but I didn't want to show it on the outside. I thought if I showed my true feelings, people wouldn't like me.

One day as I lay reading Chicken Soup for the Soul, I came across a page that said ‘I AM’. The words were not used in a negative context such as the way I had used them. They were said in a happy, reassuring way. The page read:

*“I am an architect: I've built a solid foundation;
and each year I go to that school I add another floor of wisdom and knowledge.*

*I am a painter: With each new idea I express, I paint a new hue in
the world's multitude of colours*

*I am a scientist: Each day that passes by, I gather new data,
make important observations and experiment with new concepts and ideas.*

*I am an astrologist: reading and analyzing the palms of life on
each new person I encounter.*

I am an astronaut: constantly exploring and broadening my horizons.

I am a lawyer: I'm not afraid to stand up for the inevitable and basic

rights of myself and others.

*I am a teacher: By my example others learn the importance of
determination, dedication and hard work.*

I am a banker: Others share their trust and values with me and never lose interest.

*I am a mountain climber: Slowly but surely I am making my way to the top.
Most important, I am me”.*

Amy Yerkes

After reading this article, I had the strength to push forward. I wanted to be the best that I could be and to become a leader, not a follower. I was tired of acting the way people wanted me to act. I wanted to be my own person; I wanted to be the real me. Most of all, I wanted self-confidence.

Finally I decided that I was going to portray the real me. At first my friends started to notice a big difference in me. I thought that my friends were not going to like me anymore. I had created a very believable false identity. I even had myself convinced. Unexpectedly, I was wrong about what my friends thought of me. They actually liked me for me and not someone else.

As I look back on my life, I am happy with what I have accomplished and happy for being me. Sometimes I think that I will lose myself again, but I know that if I don't want to, I don't have to. With the support of my family, friends and teachers, I have become the person that stands here today. As I am in my last year of highschool, I am approaching a time in my life of complete uncertainty. I know that I have accomplished many heights. I have many choices to make about my future. I am proud of who 'I am'. I know now that the words 'I am' are potent words because you have to be careful about what you attach to the end. The words have a way of reaching back and claiming you. If you attach the right ending to the words, you can discover yourself.

I have discovered and proven to myself that if you believe in yourself, you can accomplish anything. All you have to do is 'Be the best you can be' and remember that it is better to "Be a leader and not a follower".