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LIVE LIFE TO THE FULLEST

Imagine for a moment that you have two big canvases. One is plain white, the basic quality of every canvas. The second one is splattered from top to bottom with a wide, bright array of colours. Which one would you hang on your wall? Now imagine that you could live one of two lives. You could just do what you needed to get a along and leave it at that, or you could have new, exciting experiences at every chance you got. If you had the chance, which life would you want? Danny Kaye once said "Life is a great big canvas and you should throw all the paint on it you can." In other words, live life to the fullest.

It's easy to think of reasons not to try new things. "No chances have come my way", "It's not cool" and "My friends aren't either" are just a few that come to mind. There are many hurdles that can get in the way of living a full life, but it's worth it to overcome them. First of all, there's the fact that not everyone is given the same opportunities. Whether you are rich or poor, big or small, incredibly unique or amazingly average, there are always new things to try if you look for them. Let's say someone in a wheelchair wanted to get involved in sports. At first you'd think that they wouldn't be able to, but all they would have to do is look for a chance. They could look for sports teams and clubs in their area that would let them play. There are organizations that run sports programs for handicapped people. If they were really serious about it there are also handicapped Olympics. All these things could help this person get involved with other people who have similar handicaps, as well as non-handicapped people. It would also make it easier for recently handicapped people to adapt to the change in their lives. They would be in an understanding environment with people that would treat them as the real people they are.

Another hurdle that most people have to overcome is not trying things because your friends aren't. This one is very common because it's not easy to enter into something without knowing your friends will be with you. Let's say there were five friends and none of them wanted to get involved in Guiding. If their friends didn't want to try it out, then they might not either. If you're interested in something, then go try it out, even if it's not "cool". If you have true friends, they won't mind you trying a new hobby and may even join to keep you company. You will probably meet new people as well, to add to your list of friends. Real friends wouldn't hold you back from doing something that you want to do.

By trying new things, you can discover a brand new part of yourself. When I was in grade four I had to write a speech and say it in front of my class for the first time. I was terrified and I dreaded that day. But when I finally said my

speech I was given the chance to say it again in the gym competition. I found I actually enjoyed speaking in front of people! Every year my speech got a little better, and I enjoyed saying it a little more. If I hadn't agreed to speak in the gym in grade four, I still wouldn't want to speak in front of people and I wouldn't know I was good at it. It would be like a part of me had never been discovered, and probably never would be. If you live life to the fullest at all times you can discover more about yourself than you ever dreamed.

I've found that I am happiest when I'm busy. You can get busy by doing just what you need to, but it's not the same as having new exciting things to do. For a few years I didn't like summer vacation. The first week or two was great, sleeping 'til noon, watching TV and swimming, but then it got boring. Swimming turned into a chore and watching TV wasn't entertaining any more. Things got too routine and I couldn't wait to get back to school when clubs and sports would start again. Then, last summer, I discovered how to enjoy myself. For three months I helped with day camp, went camping, babysat, kept score for a baseball team and went to the CNE. I was running everywhere and I wasn't always sure where I'd be but I loved it! It was different and unpredictable, so I didn't get stuck in a routine. I know some people who are as busy as I was that summer, but not with things they like to do. For them it's just stressful. If you try to live life to the fullest, you'll almost always be busy and happy.

Getting involved in lots of different things can widen your outlook on life. It can help you meet new people and go past your first impression of a person, to get to know what they're really like. On the first day of grade six, a new girl walked into my classroom and the first thing I thought was "I don't like her". I don't know why, but that's what I thought. Once I had been in class with her for a few days, I discovered that she was a wonderful person and we became close friends. If I hadn't been in class with her I never would have gotten to know her, and I would be short a great friend. Getting involved in different things can also help you prepare for the future. You never know what kinds of skills you'll need later on in life. Imagine a person who spent their whole childhood planning and preparing to be a professional athlete. They went to high school and focused only on graduating, and practicing their sport. When they finally tried to become an athlete, they failed. What could they do? They would have to start all over again and find something they enjoyed doing that they could make into a career. If they had been involved in lots of different things when they were young, they would already have other ideas for careers. They could have saved themselves a lot of time and trouble. Trying new things and meeting new people are important parts to living a full life.

By now you can probably tell that, besides being fun, living life to the fullest can benefit you in many ways. It can help you get along with people, find a career and discover part of yourself. It can help you all through your life. Now that you have seen what living life to the fullest can do, which canvas would you choose?