
UCF Forum

10-7-2015

The Best Leap of My Life Could Be Yours, Too

Traci Evison
University of Central Florida

 Part of the [Communication Commons](#), and the [Family, Life Course, and Society Commons](#)

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/ucf-forum>

Information presented on this website is considered public information (unless otherwise noted) and may be distributed or copied. Use of appropriate byline/photo/image credit is requested. We recommend that UCF data be acquired directly from a UCF server and not through other sources that may change the data in some way. While UCF makes every effort to provide accurate and complete information, various data such as names, telephone numbers, etc. may change prior to updating.

STARS Citation

Evison, Traci (2015). The best leap of my life could be yours, too. UCF Today, 2015-10-07. Retrieved from <https://today.ucf.edu/the-best-leap-of-my-life-could-be-yours-too/>

This Opinion column is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in UCF Forum by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact STARS@ucf.edu.



The Best Leap of My Life Could Be Yours, Too

By Traci Evison
UCF Forum columnist
Wednesday, October 7, 2015

I recently gave myself a tandem skydiving jump to celebrate my 40th birthday. Jumping out of an airplane is much less expensive than purchasing a flashy new sports car, I reasoned, while tapping the Groupon button on my phone.

Some may be alarmed that I purchased a discount ticket for an activity that could put my life in jeopardy. Does the adage "You get what you pay for" apply here? Would you want to take that risk?

Surprisingly, I thought less about this decision than I usually do deciding which overpriced coffee to buy at the coffee shop. Why is that? Why would this 40-year-old throw caution to the wind?

One answer to these questions is that by the time you've reached 40, you likely have allowed yourself to have moments when you really feel alive by experiencing the full spectrum of human emotions, including uncertainty, angst, love and joy, to name a few. Somehow, jumping out of an airplane seemed like it would usher in a few more moments of this human experience – so I didn't hesitate.

Now if you feel like you have hit a certain age and missed out on these things, and have an extensive bucket list of ever-growing wishes, then I would suggest to you that jumping out of an airplane may be just the thing you need.

Poet Mary Oliver has a nice way of putting it:

*Listen, are you breathing just a little,
and calling it a life?...*

For how long will you continue to listen to those dark shouters,

caution and prudence?

Fall in! Fall in!

The second answer to these questions is that age is not indicative of behavior or mindset, because you are only as old as you feel. Whether or not you decide to have fun, I may have some news for you: You are still going to age. Why not enjoy it?

I can put on the trappings of adulthood and responsibility and even enjoy it most days. But the idealistic and carefree heart of my mid-20s should and still remains a part of me, too – the young adult who thought she could do anything and would undoubtedly save the world in the process.

A Pew Research survey of about 3,000 adults explains why I feel 25 when I'm really 40. In fact, it showed that the older people get, the younger they feel relatively. Among 18- to 29-year-olds, about half said they feel their age, while about a quarter said they feel older than their age, and the other quarter said they feel younger. By contrast, among adults 65 and older, 60 percent said they feel younger than their age, compared with 32 percent who said they feel exactly their age, and just 3 percent who said they feel older than their age.

Moreover, the gap in years between actual age and “felt age” widens as people grow older. Nearly half of all survey respondents 50 and older said they feel at least 10 years younger than their chronological age.

So it is perfectly logical to feel 25 at 40; we've established that. But is it perfectly logical to jump out of an airplane? I'm still going to answer yes to that question.

The jump itself only takes 20 minutes total, including the amount of time required for the airplane to reach the proper altitude. But the emotions felt during the short experience are so condensed and spectacular, I can honestly say I have never felt such a range in such a short time span.

It began with a mild panic attack when the airplane doors closed and the plane took off. There was no turning back at that point, and no escape.

Being a novice, I made the mistake of getting in the airplane last. That means I was the first one to jump out. Again, not completely thought through – but that's OK.

After making the sign of the cross several times across my chest and praying to God that I would reach the ground safely, I took that leap along with my trusty skydiving instructor.

Freefalling from 11,000 feet at 115 mph is both exhilarating and terrifying at the same time, but only lasts about a minute. When the parachute is pulled and you begin floating toward earth, seeing it as the birds do when flying, the serenity and relaxation you feel are completely opposite from the riot of emotions flooding your system just moments before.

Where else are you going to have such an intense and gratifying experience? If nothing else, you will be reminded of how amazing life is. Your experience and emotions will be unique to you, and the whole adventure is worth it.

It was the best leap I've made in my life.

Traci Evison is a benefits coordinator in UCF Human Resources. She can be reached at traci.evison@ucf.edu.