



Some
Funny
Things
Happened
on the Way
To Being 50!

Life Lessons and Random Crap
I Learned in My Half Century
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Christmas Eve was a big day . . . not only because Santa and his reindeer were preparing for all their deliveries but yours truly turned the big Five-Oh! Admittedly I found turning 30 really difficult, but I have a profound sense of peace with being 50. Having suffered a lot of loss over the years due to cancer, I have come to look at each day as a gift. I also know that while the present is pretty darn awesome, the best is still yet to come. It gets me giddy with excitement!

As many of us often do this time of year, I reflected on the last year and began dreaming about the New Year. I thought about my first 50 years and all I have learned along the way (and who I have become in the process). I then began jotting it all down and here is all the random stuff that was floating around in my head since that time:

- ▶ We all know that we can't tug on superman's cape, we can't spit into the wind, we can't pull the mask off the old lone ranger and we can't mess around with Jim (thanks Jim Croce for those inspiring words).
- ▶ Everyone has something going on in their lives. We often think we are inadequate or different than others. We are not. Everyone has something challenging them or some drama or BS going on in their life. We all have insecurities and self-doubt. We are all equal in our "dysfunction." Don't put anyone on a pedestal and be envious of them thinking they are better off than you are!
- ▶ It's okay to be vulnerable because in doing so, you may be inspiring others (and it is so freeing, too).

▶ Say no to volunteering, especially as you progress in your career. We all have to do our part to make the world a better place, but there is a time and place. Just because someone asks you to serve on a board doesn't mean you need to. If your heart isn't in it, then you aren't bringing your best to the position. And they deserve the best of you. Conversely, if you aspire to volunteer more or serve on a board for an organization that means a lot to you, go for it. Nominate yourself if you have to!

- ▶ Be imperfectly perfect. Be 100% authentic all the time and embrace your quirkiness (exploit it in fact!). Own it and don't apologize! Be consistent as no one likes to encounter someone who is moody and unpredictable. Blaze your own trail, sista. No one wants to encounter someone who is fake and not being their true self (they can tell, believe me).
- ▶ Do what brings you joy – in your work, in your community, in your family, in your private time. If it doesn't make you happy, don't do it. I can hear you now, "Oh, but Leslie you don't understand." It's bullshit.
- ▶ Don't hold meetings for the sake of holding a meeting. And say no to those who invite you to one! Ask if it can be done via telephone instead. Meetings are such a waste of time. If you are leading a meeting, distribute the agenda in advance, stick to it and accomplish it in record time. Set the example to others of how a meeting should go.
- ▶ Do your best to not be an ass. And stay clear of those who are.



- ▶ Storage containers are better than sliced bread! Life is so much better with storage containers, use them and eliminate clutter and chaos in your life. Everything in its place and a place for everything as the saying goes!
- ▶ Always have ingredients on hand to make chocolate chip cookies and a good meal (advice given to me by a former teacher).
- ▶ Another friend's advice to me . . . don't be afraid to rock the f'ing boat. These simple words changed my life.
- ▶ Advice from another friend . . . what is the worst that can happen if you take a chance or you ask for what you want? Don't ask, don't get.
- ▶ Which leads me to . . . guard your time and only be with people who make you happy and lift you up. Take inventory of your friends and ask yourself what you really feel about them, how they enhance your life (or whether they suck the life out of you). Doesn't make them bad people, but they are perhaps not YOUR people anymore. If you own a business, look at your clients and decide if they are someone you still want to do business with. Maybe they take up too much time and actually cost you money. It's okay to fire a client.
- ▶ Be with someone who is a good kisser (and make sure you are one, too). Do you really want to spend your days with someone you can't stand kissing? Never under-estimate the power of touch with everyone you meet. In fact, the motto in Women Inspiring Women is "hugs instead of handshakes" as life is better with hugs.
- ▶ When you have an idea or thought, somehow capture it – no matter where you are or what you are doing. As quickly as it came into your head, it will leave! In this day and age with so much info coming at us, it is easy to forget important things. I highly recommend Evernote for material you want to save long term, otherwise pen and paper are fine.
- ▶ Speaking of pens, use a pen that makes writing enjoyable and sometimes just write in your best penmanship to show you can. Sounds odd, I know! Even consider sending a nice card once a week to someone special. As for me, I like Uni-Ball Jetstream retractable pens and used to only like blue ink. Now I have surrendered to black ink (trying to conform to societal pressures).
- ▶ Coloring reduces stress. Trying to be perfect at it does not. Adult coloring books are a great invention.
- ▶ Always have Kleenex in your purse along with a pen and something to write on. In this instance, any pen and paper will do!
- ▶ Always have an updated resume on hand (even if you are self-employed), have gifts and cards for all occasions, a nice dress ready to wear to an interview, funeral or party, copious amounts of marketing materials ready and food in the freezer or pantry.
- ▶ Even if you wear granny panties, make sure they fit you well. A wedgie all day changes everything – same with a bra. You know what I am talking about, ladies!



- ▶ Gaining weight is a solo endeavor but losing it takes a team. Surround yourself with people who can help you get to your goal!
- ▶ Engage in meaningful conversation everywhere you go. Of course it is fun to be juvenile and off color occasionally, too.
- ▶ Trying to over-analyze 'rock, paper, scissors' will just drive you nuts and rob you of time you will never get back. Right Lani Voivod?
- ▶ Technology is our friend. Invest in a Tivo or DVR through your cable company. Watching commercials also robs you of time you will never get back. If that isn't possible, read personal development, business or self-help books during the commercial breaks to make good use of your downtime. Do online banking and bill paying – not only does it make your life easier, but you pay bills on time without the hassle.
- ▶ Don't be afraid of death – be more afraid of not living a full and rewarding life. And if you are with someone as they end one journey and go on to the next, try to fully comprehend what a blessing and honor it is to be there even in grief. It is okay to break with tradition and honor the deceased with an unusual obituary or tribute/funeral/party, too. Learn from my unfortunate experience . . . if your name is in the obituary, have a house sitter during all 'events' so your house doesn't get robbed.
- ▶ Communication is key to everything in life. Ask for what you want. Speak up. Be inquisitive. Don't take anything at face value as oftentimes issues are just a breakdown in communication. Get clarification. Talk, talk, talk! Sometimes that

means being the bigger person and initiating a conversation. Your life is worth a few moments of uncomfortableness.

- ▶ And sometimes know when to shut the hell up and take the high road. Pick your battles.
- ▶ Understand yourself. I mean really get to know yourself and what makes you tick. Ask yourself what skills you need to develop to live up to your potential. Identify your bad habits and develop a plan to change those if you want to.
- ▶ Recognize that you are 100% responsible for your life – your actions, reactions, etc. For further clarification, read Chapter 1 of The Success Principles by Jack Canfield. In fact, read the whole book as it is life changing.
- ▶ And along those lines – be a lifelong learner. With all the information that is available to us today, we can take in oodles of educational and motivational info every day even in the smallest of doses. It all makes a profound difference. It is great to end the day smarter than you started!
- ▶ Don't multi-task. We women used to wear it as a badge of honor that we could multi-task but don't do it!! I am a reformed multi-tasker! Be completely focused on one task or one 'thing' at a time. If you are on the phone with someone, be totally engaged in them and the conversation. If you are working on a project, complete it with laser focus! If you are eating, be "one with your food" or the people you are eating with.



- ▶ When you are feeling restless, try to understand why. Does that mean you are ready for a big leap? Is there something not working in your life? Sometimes just sitting in quiet reflection makes all the difference.
- ▶ Embrace your work style. If you like to work late at night, work late at night. If you do your best work first thing in the morning, go for it. If sitting at a desk doesn't ignite your creative juices, move your tushy to a different seat. Understand how you do your best work. If you work for someone else vs. being self-employed, express your needs to your boss. Maybe they will agree to meeting your needs!
- ▶ Believe in yourself and all that you bring to the world. If there is something not working for you, change it. It is as simple as that. Don't play the victim. Don't be envious of others. Believe in your talents and wisdom – and your uniqueness.
- ▶ If another woman thinks you are less than a woman because you didn't (because you couldn't) give birth or because you had your lady parts removed, bitch slap them because they deserve it. You never know what another woman has been through and we should always love and honor each other.
- ▶ Stop beating yourself up. If you feel you failed at something, learn from it. If you feel you didn't give something your best, do better next time. If something isn't going your way, ask yourself "Am I doing all I can?" If the answer is "No," then get your butt in gear and give it the old college try. It is easier to leave no stone unturned than to bounce back from disappointment.
- ▶ Have cash in your wallet – even \$100 gives you a strange sense of freedom (even when plastic is right nearby).
- ▶ Occasionally do a brain dump and get everything out that is on your mind, right down to the littlest, most inconsequential things (such things as people you need to contact, items left undone, repairs that need to be made around the house, the shoes that need to go to the cobbler, etc.). Then you have a master to do list and can develop a plan to get it done!
- ▶ Often ask yourself if what you are doing at this very minute is a good use of your time? Obviously reading this blog at this moment is a GREAT use of your time, tee hee. Ask yourself if you waste other people's time, especially in the workplace (do you interrupt people's day, could you make a list of things to discuss with a co-worker and do it all at once vs. whenever it comes into your head, etc.) This also sets an example for others - you teach them how to treat you.
- ▶ It's okay to ignore the phone when it rings. If you are in the middle of something and can't give the caller 100% of your attention, then don't answer it. They deserve your best – when you have time to give it. Plus it is hard to refocus on what you were doing when the phone rang. And please don't talk on your cell phone in the grocery store and other public places. Don't be THAT person that we all complain about!
- ▶ If you own a business, people won't flock to you just because your doors are open. Spend as much time marketing your business as you do dilly-dallying around in it. There will be no business if you don't market.



- ▶ Speaking of business, just because someone is breathing and has a pulse does not mean they are your client. Don't expect your family and friends to be your clients either. Remember that it is more cost effective to market to existing clients, too. Make sure they know all the services you offer and all the ways you can assist them.
- ▶ You don't have to have an MBA to start a business, you have to have hutzpah. All your ducks don't have to be in a row to start either and you don't necessarily need to know the destination as the journey is so much fun, especially as one door opens and then another.
- ▶ Say NO to partnerships. Develop joint venture partners or collaborators instead. Be mindful of people who want to ride your coattails as they will come out of the woodwork the more successful you become. Every Tom, Dick, Harry and Susan will be inviting you "for coffee" and don't hesitate to ask them why. Coffee is great but you don't have time to enjoy it with everyone, especially those with their own agendas!
- ▶ For the love of God, please RSVP and do it timely. Don't be a host's or event planner's worst nightmare. You might not realize it, but sometimes there is a lot of money at stake and those early responses are critical. Think of an event or party you hosted and how frustrating it was when people didn't respond. Sucks doesn't it? Don't be that person.
- ▶ Be compassionate and understanding. Oftentimes things are just misunderstood ... you see someone who is rude, maybe they are having a bad day for whatever reason. Someone who appears aggressive may just be really insecure. You get the point!
- ▶ Mentors are everywhere. If there is someone you admire, ask for a few minutes of their time to ask your burning questions. If it is someone on a national or international "stage," then read about them, observe them and follow their example. Don't seek advice from people who aren't as successful as you or headed where you are headed (although there are valuable lessons everywhere, even what not to do!). And they also say that you become like the 5 people you spend the most time with, so choose your friends carefully.
- ▶ Feel the fear and do it anywhere – always have something that pushes you out of your comfort zone and causes a knot in your stomach.
- ▶ It is great to have opinions, but don't spout off unless you are willing to put some elbow grease behind those opinions (basically don't sit home and judge/spew unless you are ready to put your money where your mouth is). Don't like our government? Run for office. Don't like this, that and the other thing ... get your butt in gear to change it. One person can make a difference and don't sit around waiting for others to do it. Armchair quarterbacking is not becoming!
- ▶ Social media is great but don't spend all your time observing other people's lives and not living your own. Don't get sucked into the heated discussions or start feeling "less than" when you see others going on about their lives (things are often different than they appear).
- ▶ Have a firm handshake.
- ▶ Be the most positive person you know (and always have a consistent mood).



- Success breeds contempt. The more successful you are and the more evolved you become as a person, the less people will like you. Bid them a fond farewell, be thankful for the good times and the mark they left on your heart, and move on. Don't harbor any ill will as the problem is all theirs and not yours. If you find yourself being jealous of others, ask yourself why and maybe use that as a motivator.
- Be resilient and trust in yourself that you can weather any storm. Because you can!
- Reflect on your past with gratitude that it made you who you are vs. a victim mentality. We obviously cannot change the past, so accept it, celebrate it, move on.
- Before you head out for a meeting or appointment, confirm it! What a waste of your valuable time should you arrive to find out there was a misunderstanding in the schedule.
- Don't participate in other people's drama and make your life a grudge-free zone.
- Be aware of signs, clues and opportunities – they are everywhere.
- It's okay to dance around your house if you want. Dancing isn't reserved for the dance floor or date night.
- Many friends have expressed to me over the years the importance of deep breathing several times throughout the day. I finally do it and it works. Try it. Right now – breath in for 5, exhale for 5. Ahh, relaxation.

- You are your only competition . . . I like to have an awareness of what is going on around me, especially with businesses. I like to study the good, bad and ugly ones across all industries. I learn from them and use them for inspiration. I do not, however, pay any attention to what others are doing who are in my line of work. Watching them or concerning myself with them just takes precious time away from building my own business. Think about a marathon – if you are turning to your right or left or even glancing over your shoulder at what others are doing, it keeps you from moving forward with speed and clarity. The same is true with careers and businesses. I am my biggest competitor and I constantly try to "one up" myself (it is actually kind of fun to figure out how to raise the bar).
- Fifteen minutes can be a very powerful thing! I like to chunk my work down into 15 or 30 minute increments. It then becomes a game for me to see what I can accomplish during that time. Have 15 minutes before you need to head to an appointment? See how many emails you can respond to in that time. Feel you can't start a big project or it seems so overwhelming that you just don't get started? Do a massive brain dump for 15 minutes and organize your thoughts or tasks, do an outline of the project. If you manage your time wisely, you should have several 15-minute windows in which to take strategic and massive action. It also creates momentum.
- Plan ahead and always write down your tasks. Plan your meals in advance as well as your schedule, outfits, etc. Review it weekly, daily, hourly. Try your best to be organized and efficient. Try to batch tasks, errands, meetings and appointments to leverage your time.



- ▶ Use your drive time wisely. Listen to personal development podcasts, make copious notes about an upcoming project or marketing idea, do that all-important brain dump, or just sit in silence and clear your head. I will often head out for an appointment with an agenda of what I am going to accomplish during my drive time. For me, it is often where my creative juices get flowing. In fact, I have come up with some of my most brilliant ideas on I-93 South from the Lakes Region to Manchester.
- ▶ Also, you spend a lot of time in the car. Drive something that is comfortable and brings you joy.
- ▶ Don't be a martyr especially when it comes to taking medication. If you need meds for anything, take them.
- ▶ Christmas is great but it is so over the top. Consider giving gifts throughout the year instead. Who doesn't like an unexpected gift just because? And it doesn't get set aside in the yuletide craziness.
- ▶ As it says in the Serenity Prayer, accept the things you cannot control. We get our knickers in a twist when things don't go our way – such as it rained on our BBQ. We can't control the weather so suck it up. Or, because you are 100% responsible for your actions and reactions, move to San Diego where the sun shines nearly every day. Please be mindful of complaining if there is nothing you can do about it and remember that you don't need a dog in every fight. Ask yourself "will this matter in 5 hours, 5 days, 5 weeks, 5 months or 5 years."

- ▶ Don't send an email and assume it got to its intended person. Sometimes it just goes down a dark hole for a multitude of reasons. If you send an important email and you get no response, it may just be that the person didn't get it. Follow up. Don't take things at face value because shit happens occasionally!
- ▶ Enjoy the journey. Really take in everything that is happening around you. Rather than be upset that you are aging, embrace where you are at because it is pretty awesome to be alive. Be grateful and show it in everything you do. Know that your destiny is in your hands (I know, everyone preaches that, but it is true). Rather than rushing through life, settle down and take it all in. Enjoy it or change it!
- ▶ Give credit where credit is due. I would not have made it to 50 and would not have all these life experiences, lessons, good times, sad times, laughs and smiles without the people in my life. It takes a village – truly. And I am profoundly appreciative to be loved and supported (and occasionally challenged) for all of my 50 years

Cheers to you and may your years be freakin' awesome, too! Xoxo



Leslie Sturgeon is the founder of Women Inspiring Women, a native of New Hampshire, and a lifelong entrepreneur. She embraces her imperfections while learning about herself and others, supporting the fabulous women in the WIW community, journeying through life with optimism, and laughing so hard she snorts or pees (sometimes both simultaneously).

*Learn more about the organization at
www.WomenInspiring.com*

