

# The Time For Undervaluing Ourselves & Ignoring Our Dreams Is Over

*BY ELISABETH ROOKS*

Believe it or not, East Germany in the '80s was still filled with post-war trauma and political corruption. For as long as I remember, I have dreamed of creating a harmonious and peaceful lifestyle for myself, and I believe growing up in a family and society filled with secrets and an addiction to drama greatly shaped this desire and served as a catalyst to jump at the first best opportunity to leave my home country.

Back then, I assumed that physically distancing myself from the life I knew would free me from family and societal expectations, empowering me to "be free to be me". Traveling to the other side of the world to Australia was just about far enough for me.

For quite some time I lived on the road, savouring life and all it had to offer. Of course, there were ups and downs, and I learned to value everything we often take for granted – warmth, shelter, water, and daily food. During this time, I also experienced sexual assault and for many years I carried the shame and guilt around with me.

When I met my ex-husband he was the epitome of everything I desired in my life. Apart from being terribly handsome, he was unapologetically pursuing his dream and didn't seem to have a care in the world. He seemed to embody everything I wanted to be at the time and being the young and impressionable girl I was, I happily followed his lead.

For the first few years, his aspirations to create a life of freedom somewhere on a remote property seemed like a great

idea to me. Living in isolated places was adventurous and I believed it meant I would be less exposed to drama and the craziness of life. How wrong I was.

***It soon became obvious that my own needs, values, and dreams didn't carry much weight and while I was assured they were important, none of them were ever seriously taken into consideration.***

I was laughed at, ridiculed, and dismissed as “emotional” regularly, which only fueled my desire to become stronger and somehow earn approval and respect. When my son was born, I began to realize that I was living my husband’s dream and not mine.

Although this new realisation left a bitter taste in my mouth, I continued to tell myself that his vision of an ideal dream life didn’t seem too bad. I was repeatedly told that I should be grateful and began to believe that over time, I would learn to be happy and content.

Who was I to want more, to think that my opinions mattered and that my dreams should be considered important?

For nearly 12 years, I continued to follow his lead, hoping that by supporting him in his dream I would eventually feel better. I began compromising my core values daily and felt like I was lying to myself over and over, every single day. My daily excuse was that I was supporting his dream out of love. In hindsight, I think that was the worst part, I had turned my definition of love into something I eventually detested.

Maintaining a harmonious family home was like trying to stop a tornado with my bare hands. It was impossible. At the age of 25, I became very ill and within three months I had been

admitted to ER multiple times. Just when I thought that I was finally starting to recover, I was hit with a massive anxiety attack. By that time, I had lost 12 kilos within six weeks and deep within myself knew I had reached a point of life or death – literally. I knew that if I wanted to recover and be there for my children, drastic changes had to be made.

The time for undervaluing myself and ignoring my dreams and core values was over.

I realised that the only way to fully recover and create a harmonious life, meant committing to getting to know myself again and accepting my physical, mental, and emotional boundaries. It sure seemed scary as hell at the time, but it has turned out to be the most empowering experience of my life.

I am very grateful that I found the strength and courage to banish lies and dishonesty from my life and embark on the journey to cultivating self-awareness and self-understanding.

***Sometimes I wish I would have had someone to support me during this tough time, but I believe going the journey by myself has only made me stronger, more resilient, and determined.***

However, I also believe that with the correct guidance, much of the pain and confusion could have been eased or prevented. But then again, without those experiences I wouldn't be in the position to empower and educate other parents, which is why I want you to understand that:

- You don't have to go through the pain of not knowing who you are or what it is you want.
- You don't have to experience daily frustration and

confusion.

- You don't need to face daily challenges on your own!
- You don't have to go through years of emotional turmoil, conflict at home, and endless nights of crying yourself to sleep.
- You don't have to be a master at pretense for your children's sake.
- You don't have to hold on as hard as you can – afraid that you're going to break if you don't.
- And you certainly don't need to give up your dreams.

Instead:

- You can rediscover who you truly are and live a harmonious life.
- You can be successful and happy at the same time!
- You are fully supported on this journey.
- Your needs, values, and dreams are a very important part of who you are and I want you to fully know, embrace and love them!
- You can be honest with yourself and your children.
- You can trust yourself, and there is nothing wrong with you for wanting to be happy!
- And most importantly, you absolutely can follow your dreams and meet your family's needs.

But before you embark on this journey of recovery and rediscovery, I need you to know that it takes courage to acknowledge our needs, express them, and embrace the wisdom that lies within each individual. At some point in our lives, each one of us will face the choice to learn what it takes to live a happy and fulfilled life, or to stay within the bubble of denial and nonacceptance.

It really comes down to choosing what you want and figuring out how you can best adapt your life to meet your individual and your family's needs without denying your core values or banishing your dreams.

There is just one question I want you to ask yourself. Write it on a piece of paper and take the time to feel the answer.

*What do you choose, your dreams or someone else's?*

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