GAINESVILLE SCENE

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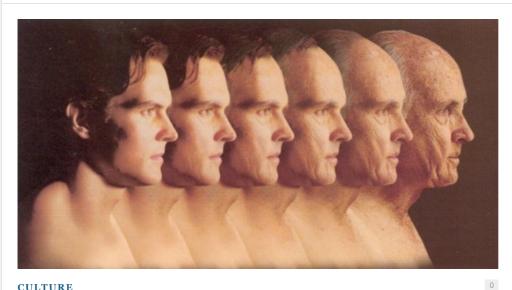
What's My Age Again?

By Alyssa Hockensmith · On August 12, 2014

Age is one of those things that we use to categorize and define ourselves and the world around us. When we're between the ages of 5 and 10, everything is wonderful because there are scheduled times for us to nap and color, school is ridiculously easy, and we don't give a fuck about what anyone thinks of us.

When we get to be between the ages of 11 and 14, napping and coloring are distant memories, math starts to be calculated using letters, and everyone's opinion of us matters more than the opinions we have of ourselves.

And then there's fifteen to eighteen. During those years, everything is heightened and more dramatic. You start to believe things are coming to an abysmal end if one thing in your life goes wrong. "If I don't get an 'A' on this quiz, I'll never get into college" becomes a regular mantra of your high school career.

Once you get to be in your twenties, though, age matters less and less, especially once you cross the threshold of your twenty-first birthday. After that happens, the differences in ages become just facts about your life rather than defining qualities of your personality.
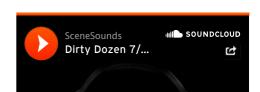
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Which brings me to the real reason I began to muse on this subject.

The other day, I was in the car driving to work and "Amnesia" by **5 Seconds of Summer** came on the radio. I found myself singing along to the lyrics with the same mindless attention that is required with any pop song, and my friend in the passenger seat joined me.

About halfway through the first verse, she made a comment. She confessed that she couldn't believe that the guys in this band were still teenagers and that she regretted some of the more lewd and crude thoughts she had about them before she learned their true ages. As I mindlessly sang the chorus and next verse, I found myself pondering this thought. I, too, was a little surprised by the fact that these boys haven't found their way into the dominion of a twenty-something yet.
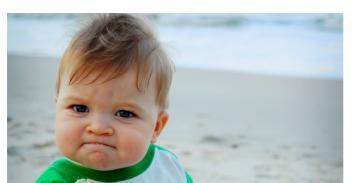
But, unlike my friend, I didn't really reconsider my feelings toward the pop-punk band due to their ages. Instead, I found myself thinking about how it was that both she and I had mistaken them for being older than they actually are.
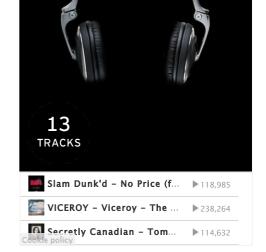

So, I did what any over-thinker would do in this situation: I constructed a theory.

We, as a society, tend to define success in different ways, but in general, when we picture success, we tend to picture people who are older than we are. Due to this general perception, I think it's possible that we project that picture onto those people who are successful at a younger age and see them as older than they really are. We do this because it's easier for us to understand success in these terms. When we see people who are younger than us doing extraordinary things, it's easy to get down on ourselves and wonder why we're not out there doing amazing things too.

It was one of those truly existential moments in which I was forced to contemplate some harsh realities about my own tendencies to question my lack of extraordinary qualities or successes. I realized that success and age are not correlated at all. It is in our abilities and our tenacity that we are able to find success, not our age.

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Just because we're getting older, doesn't mean things are just going to automatically work out. Graduating from college doesn't earn you a great job or a pat on the back. Merely being a person of a certain age doesn't define who we are. It's up to us to work to forge our own successes in this world.

As I go through life **post-grad**, I think about this notion. I am the reason I will succeed, just as I am the reason I will fail. There's no magical formula that will grant me success once I turn thirty. Age is truly nothing but a number, and I'll be damned if I'm defined by a measly number.

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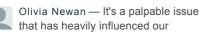
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