

Huffpost

Leslie Rasmussen, Contributor

# The Day I Realized I Had Finally Become An Adult

12/03/2013 07:57 am ET Updated Feb 02, 2014

As another birthday was approaching, I wondered when I would finally feel like a grown-up. I was over 50, yet still didn't quite know what those words meant. I was responsible. I was mature. Heck, I had wrinkles, so why didn't I feel grown up? I wondered if it was a feeling that I would one day suddenly wake up with, kind of like the flu, or was there going to be an event that would happen that would transform me into an adult? I was married, had children, been through earthquakes, which of all things should have jarred me into adulthood, but nope, none of these events did it for me.

I remember the night before my 18th birthday. I was terrified. I didn't want to go to sleep because I thought that turning 18 would change my entire life and I was scared. If someone was going to entrust me with the right to vote, that must mean I was all grown up, and at that point I wasn't ready. But, when morning came I still looked 17. Nothing felt different. I realized 18 was just a number, and maybe I was still too young to feel like an adult. I was happy enough to let my parents give me advice, and pay for my car insurance.

A few years later on the night before my 21st birthday, I was excited. I

thought being 21, I would finally be taken seriously, and now I thought I was ready to take on that adult role. I would be able to drink and gamble, even though I didn't like alcohol very much and was terrified of losing my hard earned money. So unless you count penny slots, I was not going to be setting Vegas on fire. But I soon learned that even though I had just graduated college and had my first job, I still felt like a kid. I was paying my own rent, washing my own clothes and running my own life. I was an adult in the eyes of the law, but I still looked in the mirror and saw that 17 year old girl looking back.

Time went on, and I got married, had kids and settled down. I was taking care of three other people and making sure they had everything they needed. I worked, made doctor's appointments, got my car serviced, took care of everything at the house and paid all the bills. Yet, when I thought of my parents, they seemed like the grown-ups, so what did that make me?

Years went by and then one day recently my Mom called asking to discuss a health issue my father was having. All of the sudden, it hit me. Instead of me being the child, and them being the parent, somewhere along the way, we had become equals in our relationship. We no longer have the same parent and child relationship that we had when I was a kid. I may not go to them for advice anymore, but I still enjoy telling them things that are going on in my or my children's lives. I love that they're still proud of me, and I enjoy being able to offer them help with anything they need. Instead of my parents taking care of me, we now take care of each other. And all at once I realized, I was all grown up.

Now when I look in the mirror and look beyond the wrinkles, I see a woman. A woman who's a mom, a wife, a writer and most of all, an

adult. It wasn't an earth-shaking event that made me realize it. It was my mother and father. I guess a parent's job is never done.

**EARLIER ON HUFF/POST50:**