

7 mantras I live by – Jo Stroud

I have always been a keen collector of inspirational quotes, stemming from my days at school when I loved creative writing, through to studying English at university. Quotes and sayings from Oscar Wilde and Baudelaire, to Coco Chanel and Audrey Hepburn, peppered my walls and filled my notepads.

But it is only as I have become older that I have grasped how to use this habit of collecting great phrases as a guide for living my life. I now have a number of go-to phrases that I use for inspiration, focus and guidance. Sometimes, to remind me to think differently; sometimes, to keep me motivated when things are tough; and sometimes, to kick my butt!

1. 'Change my thoughts and I change my world'

This is the single most important one for me, because it reminds me that I am in control of how I experience life. I have a tendency to think negatively sometimes, so this reminds me to change my outlook and stop expecting the worst to happen. It's adapted from something Norman Vincent Peale wrote in 'The Power of Positive Thinking', a brilliant and inspiring book; and I have it engraved on my 'myMantra' pendant.

2. 'Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined'

This is based on a line from Henry David Thoreau, the great American essayist and naturalist. I love this quote, and find the instruction to 'live the life you have imagined' a powerful reminder that we have control over how we live our lives. Only we know our dreams, and only we can create that life.

3. 'If it doesn't challenge you, it doesn't change you'



I came across this phrase when I trained for the marathon, and it really resonated with me. I find that achieving something that really pushes me, and that I find hard to do, has a powerful and lasting impact on me, as I am fully engaged and can't do it on autopilot.

4. 'Tomorrow is created by what you do today'

This is a mantra I use a lot in business, but it also applies to life generally. It's a reminder that you will only achieve the future you want, if you start working for it today. Don't just

react to circumstances and get bogged down in what is immediately in front of you: take time every day to do something which builds your future.

5. 'Just move'



A simple mantra to remind me to build activity into my daily life. Walk up the escalator; take the stairs over the lift; jump on the treadmill for 20 minutes when I get home, rather than turning on the tv; do a country walk at the weekend, finishing with a pub lunch - rather than going straight to the pub!

6. 'Bring your own sunshine'

My mum isn't well, so there are lots of trips to hospital, doctors' appointments, and challenges to deal with. But I decided several months ago that the best thing I can do is to keep Mum positive and upbeat, and meet the challenges with a light touch and a sense of humour. We laugh when we can, take joy in the moments, and look for the funny side of things. So, in my head, when I am with Mum, is the mantra to 'bring sunshine'.

7. 'She who is brave is free'



Lastly, but very importantly, is this mantra. I love this sentiment, and find it genuinely inspiring. It is easy to be afraid of things in life, but if you let your fears conquer you, your life will be narrower, flatter, less colourful. Courage to live your life how you want, and courage to push through your fears, brings you genuine freedom and happiness.

I also have a 'mantra for my life' which sums up everything I would like to be in my life. This is more like an invocation or blessing:

'May my body be strong, my mind calm, my heart wild, my soul pure and my spirit free. May I rise up with courage when I fall; and lift others with kindness when they fall. May I be brave enough to stand alone, but wise enough to ask for help'.

What are the mantras you live your life by?