

Letter to 13 year old Kelly

by [Kelly J. Beard](#) | May 24, 2019



Last week I visited the Professional Women’s Information Network (“ProWin”), a group I started 16 years ago, to talk about my later-in-life switch from attorney to author. The moderator had given me a heads-up about some of the questions, and the one “What would you say to your younger self?” prompted me to write the following letter.

Dear 13-year old Kelly,

You think that gap between your front teeth is hideous, I know, and you’ve started covering your mouth sometimes when you smile. But in a few months you’re going to meet a boy who will be one of the true loves of your life – I’m serious, you will still think about him and smile when you’re 60! When he sees you cover your mouth, he’s going to take your hand in his and tell you, “Please don’t do that. I love that gap.” That will be your first glimpse at how a loving observer can transform the observed.

When your life feels like it spirals out of control and you go through those nomadic years of loneliness and depression, look for relief in places other than where you’re going to look. Those are dark places and they will leave you even lonelier and sadder. Creativity heals body and soul – theater and art and writing and music will be your path away from so much pain, so find that path as soon as you can, and when you find it, don’t second-guess yourself or worry about

starting too late or how much farther along everyone else seems to be, and especially, don't let anyone convince you that you don't belong on that path. It's yours, baby, and it will take you to your true home.

Kiss a lot. Kiss anyone you want to. So long as they want to. But don't kiss anyone who makes you feel like you owe them one.

Forgive easily. Tell your parents you love them. No matter how hard or painful some of these years have been – and will be – they are doing the best with what they know. Imagine that every time you let go of a hurt they caused you, your own beloved daughter – decades from now – will let go of a hurt you will cause her.

Forgive yourself, too. Don't waste your precious life regretting mistakes and mis-steps. Life is full of foolishness and pain. Learn what you can from each mis-step. Atone when you can. Then let each mistake go, like a feather dropped into a river, let it drift away.

Don't hoard. Don't overspend or use more than you need. Retail therapy will never work for you.

Spend time in prayer and meditation. When you lose your faith, look for it in the eyes of babies and the very old, in the trees rustling in the wind, in the flight of an owl. Believe in angels. And yourself.

Love.