

# **Five Years Behind In My Five Year Plan**

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## **1 - Five Year Plan**

You know how you're supposed to have this five year plan with goals and dreams, all charted out, if not on paper then at least in your head somewhere? And this is the plan that is supposed to lead you through your life? You look at your life at present and through the magic of... astral projection is what I'd be guessing, you calculate what you want to have accomplished in five years time. Have this level of salary, be married, have 2.5 kids, that type of stuff... Every year you're supposed to have looked at what you've done and if you've accomplished what you set out for yourself in that year, you add another year with a different goal - or goals if you're really together. And you cannot make the mistake of thinking that a 5 Year Plan is anything like a New Year's resolution that you can just file away at the end of January when the going gets tough. A 5 Year Plan is something important. It's this great way of planning your life. It's the yellow brick road to your own personal Oz. My Dad uses it. And if my Dad uses it, it's got to make sense, right?

## **2 - The Paper**

I was looking through my filing cabinet no too long ago and I came upon this piece of paper. At the top of this piece of paper was typed "Five Year Plan," with a date of January 1992. I have not seen this piece of paper since January of 1992, and I was somewhat surprised to find out that according to this piece of paper, I was five years behind in my five year plan. And you know what the scary part was? At the rate that I was going, it kinda seemed like I would never be able to catch up. Like I would always be five years behind.

### **3 - Five Years Behind**

And when you're that far behind, it becomes a little disheartening. Your resolve begins to crumble. You begin to think that all those dreams and goals that you had set out for yourself? Maybe they're just a tad unrealistic. So you think that the best thing you can do is modify those dreams and goals of yours until they ARE actually attainable. Like a good modification for the goal of having a play produced would be: today I will brush my teeth after every meal - EVERY meal. Finding Mr. Right would become, say, trying to drink 8 glasses of water in a day. And that's a really good goal because hydration is very important. If you're not properly hydrated you will be unable to accomplish anything in life. In fact, that should be at the top of everyone's five year plan. Along with other simple goals: cleaning the toilet, painting your toe nails, making your bed, flossing. Anything of greater import and you are just setting yourself up for a fall. Right? Or does that just make me sound like I have no ambition?

### **4 - The Golden Years**

I did really well until I was about 22. I mean, I graduated high school with honours. I was the class valedictorian, despite the fact that it was contested by certain other students in the school.

Okay, one other student in school contested it. Okay, Philip Samyn contested it. You see, the English department had decided that anyone with an A average who wanted to apply for valedictorian could write a speech and present it to a panel, and then they - the panel - would decide who had the best speech. And well... I had the best speech. My speech was the best, and not only that, I was

the best public speaker - I mean I'd been public speaking since I was about 11 or so PLUS I was in every school play. I was meant to talk in front of large groups of people - it was fated. But Philip Samyn felt that I did not represent the student body as well as he did. He was bright, did sports, was on the school newspaper I think - I'd have to check my year book for that. But really, if you think about it, I was bright, I was in all the school plays, I'd been on the school newspaper one year... so really he was just... jealous. Man and all this time I thought he was doing it because he was an asshole. He wasn't an asshole, he was jealous. Hunh. That's so cool.

## **5 - Degree in Theatre**

Where was I? Oh yeah. Great until I was 22. I finished high school, gave my valedictory address and went on to graduate cum laude from the University of Ottawa with a degree in... Theatre. Yes, ladies and gentlemen you heard correctly, a degree in Theatre. Oh, No no no - I couldn't possibly have a useful degree, like English or Medieval History, or even Witchcraft in North America between 1745 and 1812, no, no I had to have a degree that will never do anything for me in life other than prove that I can attend university for 4 years. I have a degree in theatre - like you can use that for anything. "But you see Mr. Director, you have to give me the part because I have a degree in theatre. This piece of paper proves that I can act. And here are three references from past professors. So I'd just like to have that part now please. Okay?"

## **6. Gen X**

Anyway, I think I hit the malaise that happens to everyone once they've finally acquired a university degree. Whether you're Generation X or not. Of course if you do happen to fall into that Gen X category, you can feel great empathy for the characters in such great Generation X Angst movies like "Reality Bites". You know what I hate? I hate that Winona Ryder has become like this spokesperson for my generation. I bet you that she can't even spell angst. But then again, I may just be projecting here - seeing as she's younger than me and is everywhere in her life that I'm not.

You get out of school and you have no idea what to do with yourself. You're handed your degree, or open it in the mail as I did because who really wants to stand next to complete strangers and wait for hours just to shake the Dean's hand? And you think to yourself, NOW WHAT? You know that you're smart, you graduated didn't you? You've got a piece of paper in Latin proving it... But you find yourself confused and somewhat frightened, much like your average small woodland animal, caught in the headlights of a speeding Chrysler on Highway 16 at one of those really dangerous bendy sections.

## **7. Sniggering**

You're supposed to get a job, but there don't seem to be any out there for you. Especially when you have a degree in theatre. NO one takes you seriously if you have a degree in theatre, trust me on this. I swear that I have actually heard people snigger as they read my résumé. Sure it might have been under their breath, but they were sniggering. I found myself living in the bilingual

capital of Canada, having passed my French equivalency exam with a stunning 51.1 percent. I'd go in for interviews at temp agencies and the placement officer would smile at me sadly "Oh, you're uni? Oh, that's really too bad, if you were bilingual we'd have lots of work for you."

### **8 - Time Flies**

I had goals set for my life, I did! Finish university, get married, buy a house, have a couple of kids, adopt as many pets as the Humane Society would allow by law, stay with the kids 'til they go off to school, pursue and achieve fame as an actor, write my memoirs, die. Easy stuff right? I mean, sure, it gets the rabid feminists angry, but I figured that it'd work for me. That's what I wanted.

And here I was six - oh my god is it really six? - years after graduating from university... and I was a semi-professional actor. A more often than not poverty stricken semi-professional actor. The kind of semi-professional actor whose parents slip her rent money more than occasionally. I blinked and I'd been out of high school for 10 years! 10 of them! How does that happen? How can 10 years move that quickly? I mean, there are 10 of them! You'd figure that as a group they'd be more inclined to saunter not gallop. And in those 10 years what had I done? What had I done? Well I must have accomplished something.

I did... many... things in those 10 years. I did. I worked for the Canadian Space Agency for 9 months! I designed the library for the Space Station section of the new national offices just outside