

INTRO

Welcome to Woman of the Hour, I'm Abby Draper, and I love to people watch. Yes, I know that that sounds a little weird, but it fascinates me. What intrigues me the most is what people's stories are? What's the story of the woman sitting alone in the cafe? What's the story of the women lifting weights at the gym? How has the woman working 2 jobs and raising a family on her own become a better person? I want to help voice those stories, and from this, An Open Letter to The Past was born. Words are powerful, and putting the voice of the person who strung them together behind it is even more powerful.

My first story starts not too far from Carmel High School, there lives a woman who i hold near and dear to my heart

My mum, Sara Draper, moved to the United States from the UK in 2000, adopted a child in 2001, and became a foster parent in 2016.

And I believe that she is the perfect person to voice an open letter...

MUM:

An open letter to me,

Prompt:

Write an open letter about yourself to younger you.

Who are you? What do you do? What makes you individually you? What hardships have you been through? What brings you up when you are down? What do you want younger you to know about life, love, and success? What will younger you go through that you want them to know is ok?

Dear 16 year old Sara,

You can't possibly imagine that in 30 years you will have been married to Bob for 22 years and be the parent of a 16 year old daughter, Abby, and living in suburban Indiana. Have you even heard of Indiana? Maybe you have heard of the Indy 500? There are so many things that have happened in those 30 years that you couldn't imagine right now, not least moving to America from England. You don't even want to go to Disneyworld for a vacation right now, let alone live in the US. So, looking back at my life over the last 30 years, what do I want to tell you to try to prepare you for the (not so) wild ride ahead?

Stay open to experience - if you say no when your husband suggests moving to the US, life will be very different - you will not be a parent for one. Take the trips, do the year abroad in Egypt after college. Travel in Europe when you spend a year in France - you will be able to pay off the debt later and you will have amazing adventures. Soak up all you can - life is short and the world is full of incredible experiences.

You know you - don't let your parents dictate what you do. You are the expert on you. Don't allow them to live vicariously through you. Refuse to take that English Literature class! Follow your dreams not theirs. And celebrate those few instances where they coincide....

Make sure you stand up for what is right - go on those protest marches. You have heard your Dad say endlessly that we should aim to leave the world a better place than we found it - on this he is right. Helping others will give you fulfillment you can't imagine. Seeing foster kids' lives improve because of your advocacy will sustain you through the stress and tension of everyday life with them. And you will be able to torture your 16 year old daughter with exhortations to make the world better!

Be grateful for all you have. You will never feel more gratitude than you do to Abby's birthmother. She will trust you with the most precious gift there is. Close behind will be your gratitude to the US which will give you an amazing life, rich in opportunity. Teddy Roosevelt said 'comparison is the thief of joy.' If you focus on what you have and not what others may have you will be far happier. And more pleasant to live with.

Don't be distracted by the prestige of a job or the financial rewards it can offer. Don't become an accountant - it isn't right for you. Go to law school or take the social work degree - follow the passion you have for helping others not the monetary rewards.

Live in the moment - treasure your family even in those many moments they drive you insane. (That is their job after all and in 30 years you will be enjoying driving Abby insane). Your parents will be gone earlier than you could ever anticipate. Tell them you love them, spend the time with them. Listen to their stories and write them down - you will forget them and in 30 years part of your history will be lost.

You will have tough times - losing both parents as an only child living 4000 miles away will be incredibly hard. But you were 'Built Teague tough' and you will get through it, And you will learn from it. 'One foot in front of another' would be a good motto for you, or as your husband will tell you ad nauseam 'How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.' You will emerge from the dark days stronger. The negative experiences you will have will all teach you something, even if you don't realise it at the time.

Know you are loved and appreciated by many. 30 years from now you will have lifelong friends, and will have made an amazing support system in your new American home. Feel confident, be true to yourself and know you will find your tribe - it may not be in high school but you will find them and they will appreciate you for all your quirky glory.

Learn to 'consider the source.' If you don't respect someone, their views don't matter. And anything that Amanda Bowling says is not worthy of your time or mental space. She is bullying you and you need to report it. When she punches you in the library senior year don't hit her back - just walk away knowing that your time with her is limited.

When you get married, invite Karen and her parents. It will only increase the guests from 6 to 9 and she is your oldest friend, who you met on your first day of school aged 4. And if you don't she will complain loudly and frequently for the next 22 years. At least. And they probably won't make the 4 hour drive to the ceremony anyway...

Take the time to exercise and have it become a real habit - trying to do that at 46 is not fun. Wear the bikini! Your body will never be better! Unless you take up exercise now....like right now. Go to the gym right now and get on that elliptical machine. Oh hang on, that hasn't been invented yet. Get on the treadmill.

Love 46 year old Sara

PS Know you will have a really cool kid - and it's all down to nurture not nature. Or maybe not.

PPS Parenthood is the wildest ride you will ever go on. But that's another story.