

MUSING

Kidulting: Growing up to grow down

Take a good look at your expenses of any month. Chances are you have bought something that is more appropriate for your pre-teen niece or nephew, or your own child rather than yourself. But there it is, sitting on your desk or gracing your showcase, proudly yours!

If there is one thing that can truly be enjoyed as one wades into the middle of adulthood, it's the freedom to spend as you want. After the typical responsibilities and obligations, there remains the bit of your pay check that you can spend however you want to. And there is also the chance to re-do all the 'fun' things you have missed out on — from watching movies that do not exactly fit your age bracket, to going all out on a Nintendo Switch, or joining a finger painting class for adults — the possibilities are endless.

There is, however, a different kind of price to pay for indulging in these activities. More often than not, statements like "Oh! He's still a nine-year old in the cover of a thirty something," or "Just because she's in her mid-twenties doesn't mean she's past her tweenage," are dropped to describe you or someone you know.

Call it what you may — 'Never growing up,' '18 till I die' (from Bryan Adams' popular song!) or the more recent term 'Kidult' — someone still acting and engaging in behaviours like a child, although they have gone past their twenties, and in cases, past their thirties — this behaviour is more common than ever.

Before being termed as kidult, the same term was better known as Peter Pan Syndrome, coined by Dr Dan Kiley. In his 1983 book — *The Peter Pan Syndrome: Men Who*

Have Never Grown Up, Kiley had delved into the psychological issues of men who had arrested mental development.

In his own words, "This book focuses on adult males who have never grown up, how they got that way, and what can be done about it."

He dug into various psycho-social issues on a case-by-case basis for men who could not take responsibility and behave according to their age. The distinct difference between the 'sufferers' of Peter Pan Syndrome and kidults is that the latter are in control of their activities, instead of acting like spoilt, entitled children trapped in an adult body.

In fact, modern day kidults are better adapted to real world challenges thanks to technological marvels. As all-engulfing capitalism is the call of the day, there are

more choices than ever to indulge in what you want, without considering what anyone else might think. After all, the education system and the very constitution of society provides little to no life skills to fall back upon. It is still a question about coping with the social challenges and responsibilities appropriately, but that's a whole other issue altogether.

When the silly nicknames and the showcase full of knick-knacks are peeled back, it is still a decent, adult person doing his or her best to work out the knots of the grown-up life.

Call it a mental comfort blanket, or rename the behaviour altogether, you have to admit, kidults will always have a great story to tell!

By Iris Farina

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