

## Catherine Cojocaru: The concept of being an adult is daunting

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From a young age, I had been fascinated with the concept of growing older.

In August 2002, when introducing myself to my gymnastics class, I emphatically stated that I was "eight and three-quarters." A few months later, while browsing the public library, I stumbled upon a book titled "Staying Nine," by Pam Conrad. The protagonist, Heather, is terrified of growing older and attempts to avoid her 10th birthday by scaling her bedroom door frame and refusing to come down.

At the time, I couldn't imagine being afraid of becoming older. To me, growing up meant more opportunities, being able to stay up later, and most importantly, more chances to be taken seriously.

While I haven't felt as upset about my age as Heather did, turning 18 last week has truly made me think. I do have more opportunities now than I did when I was younger — I can vote, drive a car, and have a great position as a teen columnist.

However, the concept of being an adult is daunting.

In less than six months, my classmates and I will have to decide what we are going to do with the rest of our lives (or at least the next four years) and where we will pursue these goals.

How did this happen? It was just yesterday that I was falling up the stairs to freshman hall.

In less than four years, we will be thrust into the "real world," forced to realize that surviving college

was one of the least of our worries. And as evidenced by the Occupy Wall Street and other protests, this "real world" may not be all it's cracked up to be.

I don't want to appear entirely disillusioned and ungrateful, because that's inaccurate. In this time of economic turmoil, I am truly lucky to have the resources that I do. But the reality is that our generation will have to find new methods to thrive in this world.

According to the Malcolm Harris of n+1 Magazine, college tuition has increased 900 percent since 1978, and unemployment among college graduates has almost doubled since 2007. We were taught that if we worked hard and learned as much as we could, we would be rewarded with at least decent-paying jobs and comfortable lifestyles.

Nowadays, that formula is proving less true.

While growing up has its advantages, it comes with many new challenges, and sometimes, living in the moment seems to be the most attractive option. In the words of Heather, "I wish I could stay exactly the same for millions of years. Don't you wish you could stand here like this, and never change?"

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