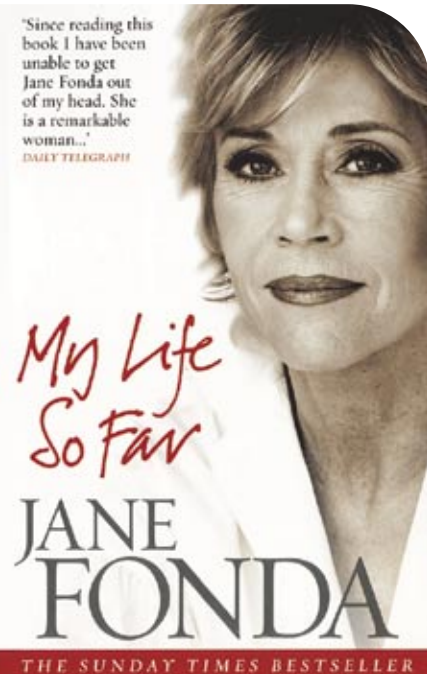


JANE FONDA

Living Without Regrets!

Recently I had the pleasure to attend the largest breakfast ever held on the Gold Coast. A morning with Academy Award-winning American actor, writer, producer and political activist, **Jane Fonda**.

by **Maggie Wilde**



Over the years Jane has appeared in a variety of movies and has won numerous awards. She returned to film in 2005 with *'Monster In Law'*. She has also served many

political causes, including activism against the *Vietnam War* and *Iraq War*. She published an autobiography in 2005 and currently lives in Atlanta, Georgia.

"I'm told by Random House if I sell 2,000 more copies of my autobiography in Australia, I will become one of the top 10 books here. I really want to be one of the top 10" laughed Jane.

Jane's message at the breakfast was a very universal one for anyone that has ever struggled finding out who they really are and how to be truly intimate in a relationship.

"I want to talk a little about the book and why I wrote it" she said. "In about 1981 my father died. It was a long and drawn out process. A sad process. I spent a lot of time sitting by his bedside looking at this face, not knowing if he was just trying not to talk to me or whether he was asleep or in a coma. There were so many things I wanted to ask him like *'Are you scared. Can you see Angels?'*

"I learnt a lot in that process" she admits. "One of the things I learned was that I am not afraid of dying but I am terrified of getting to the end of my life with regrets."

"I know my dad had regrets" she continued. "It was too late to do anything about them. I know that he regretted that he was never able to be close to me. I vowed then that I would try to live my life so that I would not have regrets in the end."

That thought stayed with Jane over the years to come. "About 15 years later I was married to Ted Turner," she said. "I was 59 years old and I realised that in a year I was going to be 60. Assuming I lived into my 90s then this was going to be the beginning of my third and final act." Jane sees her life in 3 parts. "There is no fourth act. I don't want to be older than 100, so 60 was going to be the beginning of my last act. For me third acts are really important. You can screw up the 1st or 2nd acts but if you can pull it all together and learn your life lessons then the third act can be meaningful."

"What was especially important to me" Jane continued "was to

do my third act right so I could minimise my regrets. So I thought in order to do my third act properly, I had to understand what the first two were about. I decided to devote this final year of my 2nd act to finding out what my life meant. It wasn't difficult because if I forgot anything there was always the 22,000 FBI files on me, interviews etc. there was a lot of raw material to wade through. Slowly I began to understand my life."

At the end of the year as she approached 60 Jane felt that for the first time, "I owned who I am." She realised that throughout her life she had lived outside of herself, and taken up residence next door.

"At 60" she said, "I began to live back inside of myself. I realised I'd had everything in my life except one thing: Intimacy. I had never really had intimacy and I'm not talking about sex, that's easy. I meant intimacy for real where two whole people come to see each other and respect each other as whole people. Not just bringing the part that they think is lovable to the table and leaving the rest outside – but really bringing the whole person to the table. I said to myself 'okay, if this is what you've gotta do in order to get to the end of your life without regrets, then do it."

"In order to do this" added Jane "I had to do something very scary. I had to ask my husband who I loved very much and who loved me to make some changes in the relationship."

As brave as Jane has been in her life it took her two more years until she was 62 to have the courage to say to her husband "Ted I want to be enough for you, I want you to join me on my journey for intimacy". And he couldn't do it. It was this moment that Jane realised "Holy Cow! It's not going to happen."

Jane knew finally she had a choice to make. "One voice was saying to me, Look its fine, it's a great life, very interesting life, you'd never have to work, chill out, you're asking too much. The other voice was saying, Jane you made this promise to yourself. You know if you don't follow through you'll end up married but regretting. Never having been a whole person, never having had a real relationship."

So for the first time in 62 years Jane stepped out and was without a man.

"But it was then I realised I was not alone, I was with myself. It was amazing. I was sad and I mourned for the lost potential of what could have been, but I also knew I had finally begun my journey."

continued

Jane realised that from very early in her life that she had developed a disease, a disease that she named *'The Disease To Please.'* She realised that the 'pleasing' mainly centred on her father but was also mirrored in her relationships with other men.

"I would leave who I really was at the door in the presence of my father because I was afraid he wouldn't like that part of me. I only brought to the table that which I thought he would find lovable."

As she got older one of the problems Jane faced more and more was her body image. "I saw myself as fat. I became anorexic, bulimic. And I just wanted to starve myself so I would be skinny enough for him to think I was okay. That went on for many years. Two marriages, two children and nobody ever knew."

Jane believes that it all starts at adolescence because that's when girls start to feel a beckoning towards womanhood – the beckoning from society that they have to be what others want. Which, for many of us Jane adds, means our thighs and our butts.

"I went through 60 years of being outside of myself leaving this emptiness inside. It starts in adolescence and the emptiness fills with anxiety. You hear a lot of teenage girls talking of this emptiness and they begin to fill it with their own demons. Some fill it with plastic surgery, some with shopping, drugs, alcohol or gambling. I filled mine with a food addiction. When I turned 60 I really worked hard at understanding why I had lived this way all my life. I came to a gut realization that I didn't want to be perfect. God is perfect. We are supposed to be complete, not perfect. Good enough is good enough."

This statement has had a huge impact on both men and women since Jane launched her book.

"A man came to one of my book signings and he said 'This book has changed my life'. I said to him 'Please explain.' He replied 'Good enough is good enough! I grew up and I wasn't manly enough, I wasn't aggressive enough! We forget how many men are burdened with these kinds of pressures too.

According to Jane however, the difference between boys and girls is that boys seem to have their empathy gene torn from them very early in life whereas girls lose their voice as they move into adolescence.

"I started several organisations in Georgia that deal with the issues of sexuality and gender" adds Jane. "While girls lose their voice in adolescence,

preferring to lose their relationship with themselves in order to be in a relationship with boys, boys on the other hand lose their relationship with themselves at five or six when they enter formal schooling. They're told 'Don't be a mummy's boy, don't be a girl, boys don't cry'. They lose who they are". "Their sensitivity is torn from them," she adds.

Jane works with teenagers in Georgia, helping them restore who they really are early in life so that they don't have to struggle into their 60's as she did.

You can find
Jane's autobiography
'My Life So Far'
in all good bookstores.

