

# Being 30

By Doha Al Wazany



It was a summer day in Palestine. We were at my grandparents' house in Nablus. Someone said: "Sanaa is turning 30 years old." I was playing under a lemon tree, busy picking things from the ground. This statement, however, stopped me dead in my tracks. I was shocked! I thought "OH MY GOD! MY MOM IS 30!"

I remember I started running around like crazy. Thirty seemed like a huge number! Very close to 60, an age at which I presumed people began to die. My mom is going to die! I started praying: "Please God, she is all we have, my brothers and I. We need her. Keep her." I started crying and decided to look for her. I found her in the kitchen doing the dishes.

"How old are you, Mom?" I asked.

"Why?" she responded with her own question.

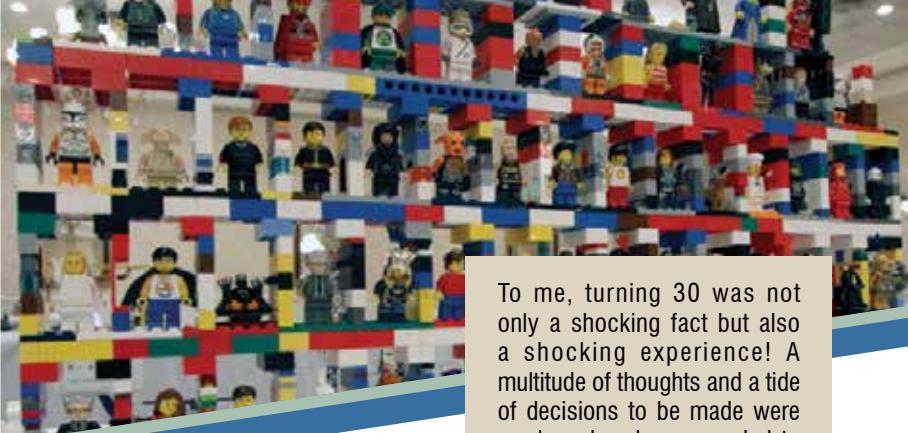
"I just want to know!" I said.

"I am 30," she replied.

I was still gazing at her as she carried on with her tasks. Then I asked again: "Mom, when do people die?" she looked at me in wonder and answered: "It is unpredictable."

This answer freaked me out! I thought that this meant that she could die any time. So I asked again "Mom, how old is Papa?" "Thirty-six," she said quickly. This answer made me relax a bit as I thought, "If Papa is 36 and still alive, then this means that they both have some time left."

I asked again, "Will you be alive when I am 30? And when Fadi is 30? And Tariq?"



She stopped doing what she was doing and gave me all her attention. "Why are you concerned about life and death today?"

"Khalto said that you are turning 30. This is too old. Too big. Thirty is half of 60, Mom, and people die at 60! I just want to know if you will be alive when I turn 30, and when Fadi and Tariq turn 30."

I always knew that I was my mother's life challenge, but thinking back on this situation, I believe that this was one of the most difficult issues she had to take on. She was trying to be realistic but she could not be. It was a very tough situation, I know!

*Mother Sana'.*



To me, turning 30 was not only a shocking fact but also a shocking experience! A multitude of thoughts and a tide of decisions to be made were awakened and now needed to be put into action. As we grow older, we realize that life is not the numbers on a birth certificate. It is the collective experience that we have the obligation to share with others in order to ensure, insofar as possible, that human knowledge spins and stops at the right places.



She was mute for a while, and so I asked her again: "How does it feel to be 30? Isn't that old?"

She replied: "Old indeed, but not scary old. Listen... You like to play with Legos. Life is just like Legos. You start with the base, making it as strong as you can with proper education and habits built on good morals, and of course with good food (since I was and am yet in the throes of a nutritional crisis). When the base is complete, you build the first floor. This is when you are in your 20s, and have completed your education and are ready to go to work. Afterwards you go on to the second floor, and this is when you are 30 and you fill the space with life and spread light to people. Then you are 40, then 50, and on it goes until your time on this earth is over and you are elevated to the sky as light."

“So you are currently shining on the second floor?” I asked.

“Yes, I am,” she replied. “But remember, life is not the number on your birth certificate, not the number of floors you build, it is the collective experience you obtain as you grow older and climb up the ladder to the other floors.”

I would be lying to you, my dear reader, if I said that I remembered all of this when I turned 30! No, that is not what happened. I remembered this only when I decided that “30-plus” was going to be my topic for this article. It took me at least three days to piece together the story in my mind, and I am quite certain that I missed many details.

As I reflect on this memory on my 30th birthday, I think that these lessons were engraved into my subconscious somewhere deep inside, but I never realized that they were there to begin with. It was a really fun night at the beach with friends and family – a huge BBQ event to celebrate the shift from the real twenties to the new twenties. As they say, “30 is the new 20.”

I don't feel old, but I feel I have growing responsibilities. I have to think differently now. I am building my life on a new level. There is no time to waste

anymore, though I never really wasted time. I have to be more serious and start planning for the years to come. I have to act mature because I have grown a decade older. I have to set the pace for the new phase and set the targets and objectives as perfectly as I can.

I think that the Lego builder within has driven me along my life's path. I was always building a floor and the ladder to climb to the next level, making sure that the base was solid and the foundations reliable.

I realized that at the age of 30, I started to look at things differently, to discuss things differently. I have a grown-up kind of logic. Reason has become my companion. At the age of 30 I am negotiating my life with myself before I negotiate it with others. At the age of 30, I snap out of my sorrow and sadness to a more positive approach. “I shine at 30. This is the second floor.” This has been driving me much more aggressively than I had previously thought.

I have a dream. Actually, I have sets of dreams to fulfill. At the age of 30, and given that I have become a public relations professional, I decided to take on myself as my client! Otherwise I would end up losing myself along the way and shedding more substance than I could accept.

I am a believer, a strong believer in my dreams and how beautiful they are. I am not old, but I am wise. I don't know when I will die, but apparently not soon because I am 30. So at the age of 30, I have chosen my life's motto:

*“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”*  
Eleanor Roosevelt



Doha Al Wazany was born and raised in the United Arab Emirates. She holds an MA in translation and interpretation from the American University of Sharjah (AUS). She is a public relations and digital communications strategist who has 10 years of professional experience in the UAE. She is passionate about Palestine, books, photography, and hiking.