

# 10 Things I Learned from Going to My High School Reunion



I'll be honest. I was scared. Filled with trepidation, to be honest, when I said yes to the invitation to my 30-year (that scared me in itself) high school (Catholic girls only boarding school) reunion. But, I'm so glad I said 'yes.' It was actually a fun and fascinating trip down memory lane.

One of my old school friends intentionally tracked me down through Facebook, so I didn't want to say 'no'. When I replied 'Sure, when is it?' I was secretly hoping it might be on a day and time I couldn't go. Turns out, I could. No excuses.

Here are 10 great things I learned from saying 'yes' and going to my high school reunion:

- It's better to live life facing your fears than avoiding them:** My biggest and best lesson from going to my high school reunion was it allowed me to face and let go of the fears I'd built up in my mind about it and gave me an opportunity to see my school and my class mates with new eyes. My mind had gone into overdrive. Who was I going to talk to? What about? What do you wear to a high school reunion? The only friend from my high school days I'm still in contact with is my friend Tania (and we met in kindy). She now lives in Seattle, USA so wouldn't be there. 'You haven't seen any of these girls for over 25 years, so why go back now?' I was a bridesmaid to one of my old school friends too, but our lives took us on different paths. What will I say to her when I see her? Fortunately I wasn't bullied at high school, but I really didn't want to see any of the class bullies again. Interestingly, none of them showed up! All of those thoughts could have kept me away if I'd allowed them to, but instead, I thought about what I could do to move past the fear. The first thing I did was used EFT on every thought and emotion that came up for me - and there were a few! That helped me a lot! Then, I decided to get there early. The reunion started with a tour of the school, so I arrived a few minutes early, which felt better to me than approaching a sea of faces alone. And my last strategy was to let my close friends know when it was on and to wish me luck - bless them, they all sent me text messages of support. I also checked-in to the event on Facebook when I arrived, so there was no turning back!
- Some things change, some stay the same:** One of the first people I spoke to was a friend I'd been a bridesmaid for but hadn't seen in 20 years. She looked almost exactly the same! What did I say to her? I realised it was 25 years since she married her high school sweetheart, so I blurted out 'OMG! Is this year your 25th wedding anniversary?' She said, 'Yes! It was last weekend,' with a tear in her eye and that was enough to set us both off! It was so strange to tell her that 25 years on, Rick and I are now part-owners of The Strathmore Hotel where she'd had her wedding reception. I then noticed a woman I didn't recognise at all. She was probably the only one I couldn't place, so I asked my friend, 'Do you know who that is?' She said, 'I think it's (name withheld)! How different does she look?!' It was actually another one of my closest friends and she looked completely different. Once an athlete with short hair, she was now a Michelle Bridges-like knockout, with long hair (and fittingly, has just changed careers from teaching to personal training). But one thing was still exactly same - she still laughed heartily at everything and anything, with her cheeky, infectious laugh!
- I have some great old school friends:** As the night went on and I continued to chat to old friends, I realised how lucky I was to have the opportunity to see them again and catch up. With some, it actually felt like we'd just spoken a week ago, and all those years we hadn't seen each other seemed to just fade away.
- I need to work on improving my memory:** A lot of the night was spent reminiscing about the things we'd done. As the stories came out I realised just how much I'd forgotten and was amazed at the clarity and graphic detail that some of these women were able to recall, especially about things I'd done, almost like it had just happened. Places that I'd almost forgotten and our parents wouldn't dream of us going to as 14 year olds like The Shandon, The Lakes Resort and The Bridgeway Hotels. Scary. Note to self: work on improving my memory!



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- Lots of secrets and stories:** There were secrets shared that would mean my school friends would need to kill me if I revealed them. First kisses, boarding school antics and controversial and scandalous situations that had happened to us as teenagers, and made us scream ..'Arrrgh! Oh my God! Can you believe that ... (names and stories withheld) ...?' As adults, and in many cases mums now, we know a number of those secrets are things people could have been arrested for, and shudder to think those things could happen to our daughters!! A few very interesting post-school secrets and stories emerged too - and as shocking and sad as they were to hear - it was good to know we'd created such a safe, trusting and supportive environment to enable this kind of deep personal sharing to happen.
- People will never forget how you made them feel:** The girl I sat next to on our first day of school came up to me and said hello while I was buying a drink. She told me she just wanted to let me know that she'll always remember how on our first day in Year 8, I came and sat next to her (we could choose where we wanted to) and started chatting. She said within minutes her fear fell away. It felt so wonderful to know I'd made such a difference to her day. I now remember actually being scared no-one would choose to sit next to me because I was new to the school, so I intentionally chose to sit next to a girl sitting alone who looked as nervous as I felt.
- What not to wear:** What I didn't expect and came as a bonus for me, was a lesson in what to wear as well as what not to wear! 'What do I wear?' was something that crossed my mind (OK, worried me) before the event - so I went shopping! Clearly there were a few who didn't. Not this year, or last year, or even in the naughties for their outfits. I wondered how they managed to escape at least two decades of changes in fashion. And then there were some beautifully dressed women - some looking casual, others elegant and sophisticated - but wearing up-to-the minute fashions.
- It's entirely possible to blossom later in life:** As teenagers some of us were plain, others awkward and a few were the most gorgeous looking girls imaginable. Interestingly, 30 years later, some of the least memorable girls had blossomed into beautiful women and, to my surprise, some of the prettier and most popular girls had aged less graciously and lost their sparkle.
- Maturity changes relationships:** One of the loveliest things I saw was women talking to women they didn't ever speak to while we were at school. Growing up there were some distinct friendship groups with very little overlap - the boarders and the day 'scraggs' as we were called, and then there were groups based on our backgrounds, sporting abilities, academic achievements, extreme wealth (the snobs of the school) and so on. All of that separateness had now fallen away.
- The strength of the human spirit:** The last lesson I learned in the car park as I was leaving. I discovered that one of the women there had been unwell for some years and was currently on dialysis three times a week. She was also waiting have her second liver transplant. I didn't get to speak to her, but I know she was still partying on when I left. I bet she didn't hesitate, the way I did, in coming that night!

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