

LETTER TO A 15-YEAR-OLD

By Margaret Mason

I have found it very difficult to write on this topic because I don't feel qualified to advise any 15-year-old on their life, let alone instructing them in the way they should be acting.

The only person I feel I have the right to send a letter to is my own 15-year-old-self, and I've produced a few trial attempts at this. They all came over as a load of sentimental twaddle. And I've just worked out why.

It is because I wouldn't be the person I am, I wouldn't be "me", had I received that letter. I am what I am because of the choices I made throughout my life. OK, I've made some bad decisions. I've done things that were very dubious, either morally or practically, or even both. I've sailed, wide-eyed and innocent, into seas that any idiot could see would swamp me – and they did! But all these experiences add up into a personality. Mine.

If you haven't faced disaster once, how do you know you can cope if it strikes again? It is choosing the wrong man first which enables you to recognise and hold onto the right one when he appears. Being unkind once teaches you never to be so again.

If I had to tell my 15-year-old-self anything, it would be to ignore any well-meaning mutters from the future. It is your life – go live it as best you can. Have a ball – you're the one with the starring role after all, so play it for all you are worth.