

Sometimes when I enter a familiar room or street, I think I see a past self walking toward me. She can't see me in the future, but I can see her very clearly. She runs past me, worried about being late for an appointment she doesn't want to go to. She sits at a restaurant table in tears of anger arguing with the wrong lover. She strides toward me in the jeans and wine-red suede boots she wore for a decade, and I can remember the exact feel of those boots on my feet. She sits in a newspaper boardroom with the sort of powerful men who undermine her confidence the most, trying to persuade them to support a law that women badly need—and fails. She's a ghost in the lobby of an office building that she and all the women of *Ms.* magazine walked through for so many years. She rushes toward me outside a lecture hall, talking, laughing, full of optimism.

I used to feel impatient with her: Why was she wasting time? Why was she with this man? at that appointment? forgetting to say the most important thing? Why wasn't she wiser, more productive, happier? But lately, I've begun to feel a tenderness, a welling of tears in the back of my throat, when I see her. I think: *She's doing the best she can. She's survived—and she's trying so hard.* Sometimes, I wish I could go back and put my arms around her. . . .

We are so many selves. It's not just the long-ago child within us who needs tenderness and inclusion, but the person we were last year, wanted to be yesterday, tried to become in one job or in one winter, in one love affair or in one house where even now, we can close our eyes and smell the rooms.

What brings together these ever-shifting selves of infinite reactions and returnings is this: There is always one true inner voice.

Trust it.

— Gloria Steinem
Revolution from Within