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We are no longer who we once were

by Mark Pavilons

Being at the top of the food chain, we human beings like to think of ourselves as top dogs.

We're intelligent, and can follow our gut reactions and logic equally with ease. We can speculate, draw conclusions, and using our opposable thumbs, can build things.

We've come a long way, baby, so far in fact that many believe we've stopped evolving. But that isn't the case.

Sure, it took us 200,000 years to get this point in our history. But we've only lived in civilized communities for the past 6,000 or so years. Heck, we only learned to play the saxophone in the last 150 years.

I love history and I'm fascinated by ancient civilizations, their way of life and their accomplishments with seemingly little technology. I admire our ancestors' resilience and strength in the face of real challenges. I?love the pride they took in simple and complex things.

I am grateful that I am here today, largely because my ancestors survived, beat the odds, excelled in some way. I?repeat one assertion that I still find almost unbelievable: We are here today because our lineage ? each and every one of our ancestors ? lived and reproduced. This chain of succession had to remain unbroken since the beginning of time, in order for us to be here. Kinda makes winning the lottery and beating those odds seem like child's play.

So, to them, I extend my heartfelt appreciation.

So here we are, humankind, in the midst of a pandemic that continues to spiral out of control.

Been there, done that. One of the first recorded instances of the plague occurred in Constantinople in 541 AD, which claimed 10,000 people per day, or a total of some 25 million.

The Black Death in Europe in the 1300s took 50 million people.

The most referred to epidemic in modern times is the Spanish Flu, which killed an estimated 100 million people between 1918-1920.

Considering the scale of these pandemics, the fact our ancestors remained unscathed is almost unfathomable. Just how did they carry on in the face of such tragedy?

Physically, humans haven't changed that much in the past 1,000 or so years. But we are constantly mutating, with genetic variations occurring all the time. Our species really came into its own in the past 5,000 to 10,000 years according to researchers.

Interesting fact: no two humans are genetically identical.

We all know that very few of us are physically similar. We like to think of ourselves as unique, even though we share common blood and tissue qualities.

Where we differ is all in our heads, quite literally.

Our brains are the central computer, the soul if you will, of each of us. No two of can see things in exactly the same way, and this is one of the reasons it was once called the ?battle of the sexes.?

Change really is the only constant in our lives and we all must change, alter our ways, and adapt. There are countless ways in which we change, from our smallest of bad habits, to how we see the world. Often, change is forced upon us through loss, or gain.

It's our ability to adapt, grow and learn that has kept our species thriving all these millennia.

How much have you changed over the years?

Believe it or not, we are no longer the person we once were, according to recent studies.

A 2016 study highlighted by the British Psychological Society, reviewed data from participants over a 60-year period. They were asked to rate themselves on personality traits, and the results were remarkably different.

The bottom line is our personalities change noticeably throughout our lives.

Sure, we all know we've come a long way from our adolescent self-centred behaviour. But it's interesting to note that things like kindness, generosity, compassion, tolerance, honesty, reliability all change over time. We lose some traits and gain others. We fine-tune ourselves, and we sometimes let things eat away at our brains.

Think of ?Back to the Future,? or a similar time travel inspired theme. How hard would it be to talk to, argue with or convince your younger self? I?don't know that I'd want to go back and revisit high school Mark. I don't know if I'd like him!

We always hear from an old relative that so and so was always a rebellious person, even as a kid. It looks like this person is an anomaly according to this study.

I think we are more maleable than we think. Our surroundings, peers, social circles all impact how we develop. Most of us think that once we reach adulthood, most of our characteristics are set or cast in stone.

Thankfully, if this study is accurate, that's not the case.

I'm happy that I can continue to grow and blossom like a massive sunflower.

I fully agree and understand that learning is continual. I?learn something new every week, from people and events I encounter. That's one of my favourite aspects of this profession.

The pandemic has also taught us to respond, adapt and change more quickly. For us in the news game, it's hard to keep track of the multitude of changes, which tend to occur daily, if not hourly. Places are open, then closed, then restricted ...

I do not envy anyone in retail or the service industry, who has encountered almost insurmountable change in the past six months or so.

Will we all be changed forever, when we emerge from under this pandemic? Will we be better or worse for the experience?

Time will tell. If we're forced to change, let's all change together, and help those who may be lagging behind.