

Allowing ourselves to linger for no reason

by Mark Pavilons

The Finns have a special word *oleilu* which means lingering or spending time without any particular purpose. It denotes the need to allow yourself to simply exist, even for a little while.

Love the concept.

Here in North America, we'd call that laziness or lack of motivation or direction. Sad.

Sad, because there's so much to be gained from simply listening to a babbling brook or staring deep into the forest.

Lingering is almost rebellious as we rush through meals, speed through conversations and scroll past images with lightning speed.

Merriam-Webster has some interesting definitions of linger, such as "to move slowly, be slow in parting or in quitting something." It also cites that linger means "to remain existent although often waning in strength, importance or influence."

Wow, it seems even our lexicons have a strange view of this activity, or lack thereof.

But, my friends, I liken lingering to remaining in a particular state, place, or situation for a prolonged period of time, often beyond what is considered normal or expected.

It involves a sense of reluctance or delay in moving on, whether it be from a physical location, an emotional attachment, or a thought process.

Clara Schumann hit the nail on the head when she remarked: "Why hurry over beautiful things? Why not linger and enjoy them?"

That's why we humans seek solace, comfort and the bounty that nature brings. I remember our annual family vacations at The Delawana Inn at Honey Harbour. The first thing I did was leap out of the car, get to the water's edge and simply stare at the scenery. Shortly thereafter, I'd find the nearest shore, whip off my shoes and walk in the water, as if it were some healing elixir.

I think it actually is, and my Picean wife would wholeheartedly agree.

Il dolce far niente is an Italian phrase, and philosophy, that roughly translates as "the sweetness of doing nothing."

To Italians, it can mean having a cup of coffee with a friend, heading to the beach or sitting idly on a bench watching people go by.

The Dutch call it *niksen*, literally doing nothing or being idle. They embrace the idea of sitting in a chair and just looking out a window.

How many of us here in hectic southern Ontario have spent much time watching the world go by?

Zhuangzi once said doing nothing is the "ultimate happiness."

I concur, and yet who has the time to just chill, or sit at the dock of the bay wasting time? Maybe some of you enjoyed those moments over the summer, but play time is over!

The crazy thing is the real world, and all of its stresses, is just outside our door.

From chemo and bank woes, to car insurance and grocery bills, I have my hands full.

While dealing with cancer, I've changed my attitude several times. I now make it a point of trying to reach a place ?? calm relaxing spot ? every day. It can be on the couch, with the TV news turned down low; engaging in my hobby of model airplane building; taking a drive, not for errands but for pleasure. Serenity can be found almost anywhere, you just have to look for it.

I have long thought our European counterparts have figured out life better than us. Aside from siestas, they do tend to take everything a bit slower and easier. They enjoy their meals and soak up camaraderie at every opportunity. They bask in the sunshine. There is more to life than increasing its speed!

I do remember life before ? Sunday shopping, ?? and I recall all the public debates and people arguing that making it a regular day would ruin society.

There was a time, my friends, when Sundays involved sitting on the porch and afternoon naps. We listened to the radio, or records. Friends would drop by unannounced because they knew we would be home, and they were welcomed with open arms.

I think our society went down hill a little over a decade ago, when everyone grabbed their first smart phone. ? While these things opened up a whole new world ? and prevented us from being idle ? it has become the proverbial Pandora's Box. ? Be careful what you unleash unto the world!

Today, these devices suck up several hours each day ?? time when we could be lingering, or doing nothing.

Sure, they help pass the time, reveal interesting information and the daily news events, but they are distracting.

School boards are pulling back and limiting the use of smart phones and smart boards in classrooms. Phones are banned in certain areas and situations.

All the beautiful photos, memes and videos in the world can't take the place of watching the leaves turn to their annual fall shade. Even with AI ? and sound effects, moving pictures can't replace the ocean's waves, or your favourite spot on the dock at your cottage. They can't replace that lingering, peaceful feeling you get when the leaves rustle and water laps the rocky shore.

These images are cold, lifeless scenes, to be filed in our huge personal reference library. To what end?

This has impacted our lives so much that many are calling for less screen time, cutting the power cord as it were.

We should all unplug for a few hours each day, to really experience life.

Some will argue that lingering is unproductive and a waste of valuable time.

Really?

I want to stare all of the world's unbelievable wonders. I want the image of all of God's creations to be burned into my brain, so when I leave this earth, I have so many mental images to remember.

We all may well be lingering, during our next journey in the great beyond.

Get in the practice now, while you can!