

Balancing knowledge, gain and numbers in our lives

by Mark Pavilons

The funny thing about wisdom is that it strikes us all at different times, at various stages of our lives.

Sure, it would have been nice to have that all at once, near the beginning of our journey, but that's not how the universe works. Remember the Garden of Eden?

I am well aware that power corrupts, but knowledge? It's been said that a little bit of knowledge is a dangerous thing. What, then, would a lot of knowledge be?

One shudders to think.

According to experts and philosophers, knowledge and intelligence are not the same.

And Margaret Fuller once wrote that, 'if you have knowledge, let others light their candles in it.'

Zhuangzi said, 'much knowledge is a curse.'

As our young minds begin another school year, perhaps we should remind educators that education is the knowledge of values, not facts. Socrates said he couldn't teach his students anything; all he could do was teach them to think.

So, as we look at our lives, both past and ahead, what are we really searching for? Is it knowledge, gain, profit or numbers?

In many aspects of North American society, it's a numbers game. Everything 'from corporate success to taxi cab fares 'comes down to numbers, dollars and cents.

Plato argued that good decisions are based on knowledge and not on numbers, but others, like Shakuntala Devi, said everything around us is numbers.

It's funny how our species developed using numbers long before we created complicated mathematical formulas. Our ancestors charted the movements of stars without any knowledge of astronomy and no knowledge of math. Just plain observation, smarts and a hammer and chisel.

There is 'strength in numbers,' but not the kind of sheep-like following we've seen south of the border.

Scott Adams, with tongue firmly planted in cheek, said there's nothing more dangerous than a resourceful idiot. He also warned us that you can't underestimate the stupidity of the masses. Enough said.

But friends, our lives are consumed by numbers and we have to juggle them on a daily basis.

I check my bank account balance; put a certain amount of litres of gas in my car; measure the right ingredients in the home-made meat loaf and order the right size of shirt or shoes on Amazon.

I was never good in math in high school. My home room just happened to be my math class, and I was often late, prompting the teacher to simply invite me back after school to sit awhile.

Along with our dependency on numbers comes a bit of gain, or perhaps even greed. I guess it all depends on what we're willing to

do to achieve a certain amount of payoffs and acquisitions.

Lately, the numbers I'm faced with don't appeal to me at all. We are car shopping and I'm surprised by the prices of some 10-year-old vehicles. Finding the right SUV?or crossover takes a bit of research (knowledge)?too, and asking mechanics is always a good idea. It seems the Asian models are far superior over time.

I also found it odd that almost every dealership wants you to take out payments and even demands a surcharge if you want to pay cash. Whatever happened to ?cash is king??

Okay, I realize that many of us today don't carry a lot of cash, and rely on debit, credit and ?tap.? But my old school dad always carried cash, and didn't even get a credit card until he was in his 60s.

Unfortunately for me, I've had a lot of experience with the evil plastic and the exorbitant interest rates financial institutions charge.

I'm not sure if I?fell off the truck early in life, but I've never been one to climb the ladder, stepping on people's heads. I've never placed the all mighty dollar on a pedestal. Maybe that's why I'm not a rich man in terms of monetary wealth.

I never envisioned ?gain??as an objective. Sure, we all need a certain amount of income to survive and thrive. And oh, how those numbers have changed over the years.

I remember when Wintario was the only lottery around in Ontario, and they actually went around to small towns for the televised draws. The huge jackpot back in the 1970s and early ?80s was a whopping \$100,000, and changed to \$200,000 in 1986.

That was huge back then, more than enough to pay for the lion's share of a new home.

Today, as most homeowners know, \$100,000 is the cost of a new luxury automobile.

As I grow ?wise,? my age is a number that I prefer not to have in front of me.

I?concentrate on the numbers inside my body ? my PSA levels, white cells, hemoglobin and liver enzymes. I?welcome chemo, in the hopes it forces these ?numbers??into compliance.

Alas, any knowledge of mathematics is useless in modern medicine. Gains are often offset by losses. Wisdom comes from realizing the value of time, love and family.

Again, why was I?not granted the wisdom decades ago, when I could have better used that information? Why am I only now understanding the meaning of life, as the end draws near?

There is no real gain, wealth, acquisitions and accumulations. None of that matters.

A very reliable source once said:??For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul??

Profit??Gain? Knowledge??Wisdom? Still working on the latter two.

The only ?gain??I want to leave my children is the knowledge I've accumulated over the years ??nformation that I?learned the hard way, by making mistakes. Sure, I'd love to leave them a nest egg, but hopefully they'll manage.

Society will continue to change, and the numbers will also change, realigning with the current trends and norms.

I?hope there is a reset in the near future, where the numbers fall off the chart, and all we see are two hands, forming a heart symbol.

Who's ready for change?