

## Beating the odds every single day

by Mark Pavilons

We in the western world have it all and yet we take much of it for granted.

If you are a Boomer, you will have a better understanding and appreciation of things, mostly because you weren't privileged, rich or spoiled.

Many of our parents and grandparents were immigrants who came to Canada for a better life.

My parents came here with a single suitcase. That, and a lot of hope.

Their strong work ethic helped build this nation in the 1950s and beyond. European immigrants gave us the lifestyle we all enjoy today. I never saw war, hunger, conflict, economic collapse. I never wanted for anything and my parents made sure of it.

And so, I return the favour to my offspring, and even though I can't give them everything, I can provide the essentials and maybe a little bit more. I can also give them some advice, wisdom, comfort and an endless supply of hugs. I really hope it serves them well.

Of course, all parents, no matter what generation or background, are always there for their kids, through thick and thin, helping them through life's obstacles courses. We give every ounce of ourselves to them, sometimes to our own detriment.

But sometimes we need a little bit in reserve for ourselves. Dads know this, but moms will never put themselves first, never! They are the strongest human beings ever created!

We are frail at times, susceptible to a lot of physical, emotional and spiritual pitfalls, challenges and threats. We are often afraid, whether we're 20 or 80.

As hard as our lives are at times ? and it's nothing compared to our parents or even those living today in developing nations ? we want to live and thrive. None of us wants to die, even though we know our time will come.

We ignore our mortality, thinking ?I will never get cancer,? or ?I will never get injured in a car accident.? We never thought our mobility, or mental faculties, would ever wane. Famous last words.

In fact, my friends, the odds of those things happening are much greater than we think.

And there's no rhyme or reason for any of it. No, kids should not get fatal diseases. Teens shouldn't die needlessly in car accidents or by violence. And adults should live long, fruitful, productive lives, well into their 80s.

Neither of my parents made it to 80 ??lose but not quite. And my sister died before she reached 50.

I had hoped my genetics ??that strong European stock ??ould just get me through a normal life, into a ripe, old, toothless age.

I?pictured myself as one of those old guys, with a long gray beard, tie-dye t-shirt, ill-fitting shorts and socks with sandals, enjoying my twilight years on some beach.

And yet here I am, approaching 60 and challenges are upon me.

I'm sure there are tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, of other people walking around with disabilities, limitations,

illnesses and life-altering diseases.

When I look at the stars at night, I am reassured that a supreme power does in fact exist and what awaits could be potentially amazing.

Think about it, people. Our species arose out of the primordial ooze, and our planet blossomed with life, from lifelessness. Miracle number one. We evolved. Miracle number two. We rose to the top of the food chain, created a really neat society, filled with wonders never before seen. Miracle three.

Okay we have our faults, drawbacks, mental health issues and inequities, but we've come a long way, baby.

I have enjoyed simple things ? laughs around the kitchen table, sunsets, love, KD and even Star Trek. I never really hurt anyone and while I never attained fame and fortune, I think I did okay.

I try not to judge and I prefer laughing to crying.

I have robbed Peter to pay Paul on numerous occasions. I have lied. And yes, I routinely ask for forgiveness for my indiscretions.

So my friends, just how do we tally our lives, and get more on the plus side of the ledger? Well, if there was a simple formula for that, we'd all have it down pat.

I think, for the most part, we learn by doing. We live by trying and making mistakes. We get better by being aware and having an open heart. Sometimes we just get by. But that's okay because I will share something with you now.

You are special, unique, loved. You, by the very fact you are here on Earth, have earned your place in human history. You are here for a reason.

You beat tremendous odds just being created and born.

They say life is what happens when you're making other plans.

It is so true.

We wander through life, often without a care, not knowing what's eating away at us inside, literally and figuratively.

I saw an interesting sign on the subway recently that pointed out we don't know what other people are struggling with inside, so be nice and perhaps give up your seat. No, we don't know the burdens everyone carries.

We see hundreds of faces each week during our journey, seldom wondering whether they are okay inside.

Some are, some are not.

That's reason enough for all of us to muster the strength to smile, say ?hello,? and ?have a nice day.?

We will all have the ultimate of bad days. It's inevitable.

Until then, stay strong my friends!