

## Becoming skilled at the art of juggling to-do lists

by MARK PAVILONS

When did I?ever need so many hands?

I'm constantly asking myself that every time I?pick up after the kids, clear out the dishwasher, or take out the recycling.

It's at those times that I long for an extra hand, or the ability to balance something on my nose like a seal.

My to-do list seems to grow exponentially and wanting to make quick work of things, I overload myself. Hence the need for more digits, limbs and joints.

When I head out to the trash or recycling bin, I've got stuff in both hands, under my arms and a couple tucked under my chin for good measure. I seldom make it out the front door without dropping something.

In my role as ?server? and ?housekeeper,? I find goodies laying around the top floor, outside the kids' doors. I?know they ?intended? to take them to the kitchen and they somehow got sidetracked.

I often feel more like a pack mule than a dad.

It's funny, you know, because I had ?old school??parents who passed on so many good lines and zingers. And yet, the humour, and seriousness, is lost on my young ones.

Okay, the snow was only calf-deep when I went to school. And they never sent me to bed without dinner.

But I did receive couple of well-placed shots or ear pulls ? my just desserts for saying something disrespectful.

What has happened that our lives have become so busy, so over-extended that we exhaust ourselves time and again? Why are objects towering out of my careworn hands?Being a Virgo, I dislike having dishes in the sink. Almost every evening when I come home I?have to deal with dishes and tidy up a bit.While the majority end up in the dishwasher, I still do a few things by hand. Inevitably, just when I finish up and turn around, more dishes appear. My children are to blame. I?guess when they hear me banging cups and cutlery, it's a signal for them to bring down their stuff.

Of course, they've been holding on to their own plates for a few days.

At times, it's like there are a dozen people living in my home, all using a different fork and plate for each snack.

Are we to blame for this crazy, hectic lifestyle we're in? Partially. Those of us who are in our 50s have ?been there, done that.??We're likely mostly settled, raising families, well into our careers. Our kids are driving, working, dating. Oh, the humanity (sorry, couldn't resist that historic outcry).Even though I'm criticized for melting into my couch in the evening, I?still find there's always something to do. I?thought that once we reached a certain age and level of ?royal? status in our households, other people would do the menial tasks. Not so. I'm reduced to court jester and the person responsible for cleaning out the latrines.

With our never-ending to-do lists, when is there time to concentrate on ourselves, our relationships, our mental and physical wellbeing?

My wife is a go-getter, and she's quite organized, but she often finds it hard to focus and seldom knows where to start. That's a red flag. Once she gets her focus, she's a machine!

I am guilty of burying myself in my smart devices, to distract me from my troubles. But I neglect those around me, those who mean the most to me.

This only adds to my torment, and sense of failure.

My wife mentioned to me the other day that she doesn't deserve the struggles in her life. I get it, yet I'm somewhat to blame.

With three offspring at home siphoning us like a hose in the gas tank, it's a challenge.

I know we have to recognize our blessings, squeeze out the negativity and embrace joy. That too, takes work and it seem to be lower down on our lists.

I do find solace and a bit of inner peace at work, believe it or not.

I enjoy pounding out the thoughts and feelings on the keyboard. And yet, when I'm alone with my thoughts, it gets dark in my office.

The thing about relationships and families is they're a bit of a dichotomy. We love another, give and take from one another, yet we are isolated at the same time. We are in our own skins, in our own heads. They say our loved ones struggle with us, but I'm not sure if that's really the case.

I am afraid of what's on the horizon. I have to endure the calls, appointments and lonely drives. I cry when no one is looking.

Sure, there are ways to remove bad habits and set new priorities. Parents unite! Take our sanity back!

Yes, we are guilty of procrastination. Some of us find excuses, while others might simply use social media as a source of diversion. Guilty.

We only have about 4,000 weeks in life, and maybe I've got 500 to 1,000 left if I'm lucky. We tend to overestimate how much we can get done while underestimating the amount of time and energy things will take.

We have some major de-cluttering to do in our house. We tend to take several trips to the recycling centre in Bolton; donate clothing and toss some old electronics in bin for charity.

But the real chore is in our perspective and approach. We need to delete things out of our lives, giving us some needed breathing room.

Some suggest taking a minimalist approach to our lives, careers and business. Not sure how to do that.

I also believe we can be thankful for taking baby steps and making a tiny bit of progress. It all adds up, and at least we're tackling it bit by bit.

The Japanese philosophy of Kaizen is defined as steady, continuous improvement.

Progress triggers dopamine in the brain, which makes motivation surge. We know when we're on a high how much we can accomplish.

Of course, we all know the beginning of any journey is that first step.

I know the coming holidays will likely be a time of rest, regrouping and recharging.

Maybe re-organizing should be on the list, too!

Good luck everyone!