

Cashing in an invaluable bonus

by BROCK WEIR

Are you ever reminded that 'time is a human construct'?

I don't have an exact formula to calculate that frequency in my own personal life, but it happens far too often than I'd care to experience.

Sometimes it's mentioned with mock indignation when one is turning a certain age. In other instances, it's busted out by a person still in the bloom of youth who just picked up this little bit of basic philosophical savvy.

For them, it's almost a profound epiphany as though a profound existential building block slid into place, like it is the only human construct we have today, but why rain on their parade?

They're not wrong, of course. Our ancestors did tremendous work constructing a system of measuring time, the movement of our planets, and the general and overall depreciation all of us experience to varying degrees each time we complete a revolution of the sun. Whatever we would come to define as 'time' would, of course, march on regardless of whether we gave it a name or a few formulae to break it down into more bite-size and less overwhelming pieces.

Whether constructed or not, we humans have a complex relationship with it.

When we're kids, whether we realize it or not, we spend so much time wishing it away, just counting down the days where we cross over the threshold of childhood to the teen years and thence counting down those days ahead of us until we hit the arbitrary numbers of 18, 19, and 21 - and all the new privileges, and, indeed, responsibilities that come with those years.

Often, once we get all those romanticized privileges and responsibilities that come at those relatively arbitrary thresholds, time suddenly seems more precious as our twenties give way to our thirties, our thirties to our forties and so on.

As a child, it felt we had all the time in the world. By the time school let out in June, the intervening couple of months before we had to hit the books again in September felt like a world of endless possibilities where just about anything could be accomplished.

Now, July and August seem to go by all too quickly.

On the flipside, as much as the 60-odd days of summer vacation were a luxury, the 250-ish days spent in school for the balance of the year, excluding weekends, of course, felt arduous and nearly insurmountable.

In today's world and perception, not only do July and August go by in nothing short of a flash, the balance zips by with equal speed.

As we get older, the perception that time is accelerating is unavoidable.

Personally, I still can't believe we're just about to begin the third month of 2024. Then again, sometimes it's equally hard to believe we're in the 2020s. Heck, we were a few years into the then-brand-spanking-new millennium before my reflexes got their house in order and I finally stopped writing the date as nineteen-ninety-whatever. It's all a work in progress.

Speaking of works in progress, how about our sense of time during and coming out of the global pandemic?

I don't know about the rest of you, but I found those three dark years wreaked havoc on my internal calendar.

The perceived speed of time, or lack thereof, fluctuated wildly with what we were ? and were not ? able or allowed to do. So many of our days felt the same, no matter the time of year or the weather. Our respite were those summer days where things subsided just a little bit and then, naturally, those windows closed almost as soon as they were opened.

As a consequence, even as things returned to what is now our normal, my own sense of time emerged battered and bruised. Events that were once a fixture on my professional calendar slowly but surely returned, in one configuration or another, and largely at the same time of year they used to land previously ? and yet I found myself losing track not only of the event, but consequently both the speed in which they were approaching.

Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas ? all the biggies ? almost felt like they took one by surprise when they were a week or two away.

It took a while, but the dawn of 2024 has brought a bit more balance.

The ship feels like it has been righted, the calendar less ephemeral, and the previous rhythm of life restored, at least for me.

And not a moment too soon as Leap Day arrives today, February 29.

For some, it may be nothing more than a novelty, but in a period where time is putting the proverbial pedal to the medal, it's something of a bonus day ? and it will only be what you make of it.

Sometimes we ask ourselves what we would do if we had ?just one more day? to? well, you can fill in the blank. But how many of us will take advantage of this Leap Day to realize all the possibilities of an extra 24 hours?

For so many organizations in our community, an extra hour or three with a few more volunteer hands can make a world of difference. Taking a few minutes to check in with family members, whether they're close by or further flung, particularly if it has been a while, can also be a game-changer ? as can simply making contact with someone experiencing social isolation.

Maybe it's a chance to, even if your own cupboards are groaning under the weight of food, take a few hours to do a round of grocery shopping for a local food bank and deliver it to the people who can get it to those in need. Of course, we should be doing all of that more often, if we're able, but it doesn't have to be anything on a grand scale.

Maybe it's simply taking some time to further your creative passions, get outdoors, cross items off your ?to do? list that have been hanging over your head for far too long, or just do something out-of-the-ordinary to recharge your internal batteries in order to be the best person you can be for yourself or others.

The possibilities are almost limitless ? and, granted, Leap Day falls on a Thursday, an inconvenient factor as work could be in the way, but there's nothing wrong with banking these extra 24-hours for later.

Take advantage of them.

Scarlett O'Hara once famously said, ?I'll think about that tomorrow,? but, by my estimation, she was never a particularly good role model for anyone. Let's instead think about it now and make the most of it ? today, or whenever you can.