

Having the time of your life!

by Mark Pavilons

The purpose of life is to live it, to taste experience to the utmost, to reach out eagerly and without fear for newer and richer experience. - Eleanor Roosevelt

Don't be afraid to be alive. It is very good advice.

And it's so true that we seldom see what's shining at the end of our own noses.

For most of us, life moves forward at break-neck speed, pausing just long enough for us to slouch down on the sofa, or hit the hay with arms and legs dangling off the bed.

We run errands, run around, run out of gas.

Bill Watterson observed that we're so busy watching out for what's just ahead of us that we don't take time to enjoy where we are.

Ain't it the truth?

People, big and small, great and average, have, since the written word was a thing, commented on how life should be lived. You would think with all that information, personal insights and blessings, we'd have learned a thing or two.

Wrong.

If anything, we're still mired, stuck in the mud and beneath the mud is the treadmill, within the hamster wheel, on a moving train!

And I'm damned if I know our motivation these days. Is it success, wealth, achievement? Is it just getting by?

Or is it merely breaking even, breaking the rules, breaking bad?

I see this woman walking on Columbia Way in Bolton on a regular basis. She's wearing headphones, carrying hand weights and moving down the street without a care in the world.

She's singing, dancing to the tunes in her ears, like no one is watching. Good for her! I can't help but smile every time I drive by. I just wonder what great tunes she's listening to.

And there, folks, is one thing we can all agree on - music has magical powers. Who doesn't have their favourite song from their teen years? Who doesn't love Elvis, Elton or Freddie? Whether it helps you reminisce or is just an emotional tonic, music truly does have charms to soothe the savage breast. To soften rocks, or bend the knotted oak.

In fact, scientists and medical professionals all attest to the healing powers of music.

I have taken to listening to some soothing, healing background sounds on Spotify on my computer at work. I know my brain is always listening.

I don't know about you but I'm finding it a bit tougher to relax these days. Sure, I still smile and laugh on a regular basis, and try to pause, reflect, and feed the fish.

But being completely stress-free is elusive.

I spoke to a Bolton physician recently who commented on the shortfalls of the health care system and shortage of family doctors. He mentioned that mental health concerns are at an all-time high ? the highest he's ever seen in his career.

The cause is partly the pandemic, which exasperated anxiety and social uneasiness. But economic realities, job insecurity and other things have added to this mental mess.

My family feels it, too.

We try our best, often to our own detriment. Mustering up the strength to be all things for our kids is quite taxing.

My adult son finds our world is filled with inequities, limitations, economic hogties and rules, rules and more rules.

He's not wrong. In his anti-establishment mind set, he's convinced the system wants us to be sheeps, powerless flocks, following the all-powerful government, corporate elite and financial system.

With all the bureaucratic red tape and financial realities, our system does not encourage entrepreneurs, individuality or going out on a limb.

What ever happened to following the beat of one's own drum? When did we lose sight of reaching for the stars?

My son is also not happy about fitting into the mold ??etting a job, an apartment, meeting someone, having a family and supposedly living happily ever after. While he's more than willing to find a career that excites him, he wants little to do with the confines of our ?free? society.

While this approach is refreshing in some ways, I can't help but see it as impractical.

When we were young, we were pretty obedient and in line with things. We weren't rebels, but secretly admired those who were. Yes, we all had one or two in our class who simply did things their own way. We were with them, but wouldn't dare admit it.

Maybe we lost something along the way. Rosa Luxemburg once said that freedom is exclusively for those who think differently.

And it's that thinking that has brought our species to the level it is today. We're on the verge of solving some of life's greatest mysteries, and venturing out in space. We're creating like never before ??rt, technology, food and ways to express ourselves.

We are reaching those aforementioned stars.

So then, what's the key to living a good life?

Maybe it's music. Maybe less is more ? minimalism can be very cleansing. Maybe it's communing with nature or unplugging and getting off the grid. Maybe it's love and kindness.

I'm nearing 60 and I really don't have any suggestions or recommendations.

Like the late Anthony Bourdain said, ?get the cream sauce; have a Negroni; have two.?

We will all face the inevitable in our lives, some sooner than later.

With that in mind, dance down the street like no one's watching!