

# I?just can?t live without laughter

by Mark Pavilons

Jonathan Foer once wrote that he regrets that it takes a lifetime to learn how to live.

And Roy T. Bennett pointed out we have to ?lose all you have to find out who you truly are.?

Both are interesting sentiments to be sure.

Given the nasty events taking place all across the globe, one thought dawned on me: ?What can't I?live without?

For most average humans, the responses would be food, water, shelter, sunshine and love. Some would add chocolate and a hairbrush to that list.

But let's assume we have some or all of things already, and we're faced with an apocalyptic scenario, or the long-term power outage similar to the one we endured in 2003.

I remember it well. It began a little after 4 p.m. that August 14 and the event left more than 50 million people across Ontario and the northeastern U.S. in the dark.

If you remember, life came to a standstill. Subways shut down, businesses stalled and we cleaned out our fridges, eating leftovers, until they too, ran out.

It was so weird, almost eerie. Empty streets, constant darkness, silence.

The first day was neat, watching people dash about in total confusion and desperation. Everyone hoped, and believed, it would all be over in a matter of hours.

Not so.

With each passing day, things remained lifeless.

I?remember thinking that if an alien species wanted to invade Earth, all they would have to do is flip the switch. We'd surrender in a couple of days!

It was a minor reset, a short-term restart. Once power was restored, it was a mad dash to the grocery stores, gas stations and hardware stores to stock up on generators and the like.

Our modern world, with all of its technological wonders, shut down by a power outage.

I?picture a large monument in some prominent location on Earth: ??Mankind, our time was short, brought to an end by a power outage.?

We can laugh about it now, or can we?

Consider all the things in our possession that require power ? our phones, internet, household appliances, TV, heating and air conditioning. In our community, we'd lose lighting and refrigeration, gas for our cars and we'd have to resort to cash (gasp).

Ok, we could cook some of our frozen meat outside on the BBQ or over our firepits.

That would be fine for a while.

We'd have to resort to talking, sharing, telling stories, playing board games.

What was once considered 'old fashioned' and boring would become commonplace - the new normal.

If you think about it, it may be time for another such reset, given our dependence and reliance on our gizmos.

I always smile at the proverbial question: 'If you were sent to a deserted island, what's one item you would bring?' No one ever says a boat!

As the mayhem increases outside our walls and our borders, we see just how fragile society is. It could come crashing down at any moment due to Russian aggression, China's weakening economy, and various at-home crises like affordable housing, high consumer prices and lack of good paying jobs.

Our fuses are continually getting shorter and shorter.

So, picturing various end-of-the-world scenarios, I delved deep to see what's important and necessary for survival.

While I'm more than capable and happy to live in the woods in a ramshackle lean-to, fishing, hunting and eating bugs, it's not the ideal way of life. I've seen too many episodes of 'Alone' to know how that transpires.

Almost all of the contestants break down, not due to hunger and physical weakness, but loneliness.

And there's the secret ingredient to life.

We are, by nature, social creatures and have been for thousands and thousands of years. We've seen, throughout history, what our ancient societies have created.

I am a social being, too, and for me, the biggest necessity is laughter. They say you can stay healthy if you just laugh for 10 to 15 minutes every day. I'm there!

I try to find the humour in almost everything (okay, my bout with cancer excluded).

From TV commercials and 'dumb crooks,' to family barbs back and forth, there's a lot to laugh about.

As a wordsmith, I can also find joviality in people's speech, misspellings in written material and more. The humour level rises when you see something mistranslated to English from a foreign language. Priceless.

I was a bit of a class clown in my youth - realize that comes as a surprise to those who know me. And yes, I owned a battery operated laugh box and several whoope cushions. Hours of fun indeed.

And my brain, when not concentrating on work, projects, errands and chores, would always lean to the humour in things.

I admired comedians like Robin Williams, the Carol Burnett cast, George Carlin, Steve Martin, Leslie Nielsen. It takes talent to be funny.

And humour may be the unique quality that separates our species from all our other galactic neighbours. In all the depictions of

aliens, few land here telling knock-knock jokes. Now that would be funny!

So, my friends, I would trade that boat on a deserted island for laughter.

I could carve happy faces on trees, coconuts and make giant ones in the sand. I would try to get a laugh out of the monkeys and toucans.

Back home, in an electricity free life, I would lead joke-telling sessions and play games that centred around funny scenarios.

I know some will ridicule me, but I would trade laughter for coffee any day of the week.

As summer draws to a close, think about what's really important and vital in your lives. You may agree that fun times rank right up there.