

It's important to share our life stories

by Mark Pavilons

Sharing your story is a courageous step towards healing your own heart. ? Lynda Cheldelin Fell

If you're a regular reader of my column, you know all too well that I tend to share my life's journey ? every sordid detail.

I've always felt that having lived into my 60s, I just might have a few tidbits to impart, to share with my fellow human beings. I truly believe that finding things in common helps us realize we are not alone in this wild ride known as life.

Stories are a communal currency of humanity, ? Tahir Shah once said.

Ain't it the truth?

Really, what are we but a bunch of storytellers, reading and willing to impart tales of wisdom, humorous anecdotes and stories of horror and miracles?

Just get a few humans in a room together, or gathering for an occasion and listen to the stories fly ? narratives, fables, adventures, even folk tales. I think what makes us social creatures is our ability to share and give up the goods, so to speak. Offering tidbits of one's life journey is a very personal thing. Some are eager to spill it all, while others are a bit more guarded and would rather keep their cards close to the vest.

In my case, what you see is what you get, Hawaiian shirts and all!

I'll admit that my personal meanderings have been clouded by my cancer journey. Sorry, but it can be overwhelming and one of my coping mechanisms is to share my own details, twists and turns.

Kim McManus noted that our heartache is someone else's hope. If you make it through, somebody else is going to make it through. Tell your story. ?

And so I do, and shall continue.

My oldest daughter presented me with a couple of tasks recently ? a sheet of questions to answer and a small book entitled ?I want to have your story DAD.? It contains pages to be filled in regarding family history, love, marriage, family, etc. It's all in the name of having some written documents ? in my own words ??or her to read, over and over during her life.

My body will not last, but perhaps my words will ring immortal and offer some comfort or guidance in the years ahead.

One of her questions asked for some of my biggest ?takeaways??in life. Wow. In terms of lessons, or food for thought, I'd say approach everything with an open mind and heart. It's okay to be skeptical or reticent, but try to listen, hear and feel. Be open to new things ? ideas, experiences, sounds, tastes and smells. The world is filled with wonder, so take a bite every chance you get.

Forgive and forget ? forgive yourself, forgive others. We have enough burdens in our life, we don't need any self-imposed pain.

Travel. It's one way to get an idea of just how big the earth is. It's also filled with some amazing people from all cultures and all walks of life. Beautiful people, each and every one of them.

Greet them, talk to them, ask questions.

Another question asked what brought me great happiness. The answer would have to be my wife and then our children. Finding love isn't always easy, but when you do, hold on to it with all your might.

My wife has had to put up with a lot from me over the years, but her loyalty and strength have never waned. She's a rock, our rock.

She's also a great mom and has raised three amazing children. She's given them strength, wisdom, compassion, self-esteem and direction. They embody all of Kim's best qualities and for that I?am truly happy. I?am also happy that I?had the chance to be a dad three times over. While my parenting skills are far from top-notch, I?am there. I?have their backs, always.

When asked about parenting tips, I'd have to say be patient, guiding, present, supportive. Show and give love always, unconditionally. Hugs and kisses should always be in ample supply. It's okay to be firm, and chastise the little ones when necessary. But be careful with words, lest they leave some welts.

Be prepared for many, many late nights, worrying constantly, and trying to figure out where your kids are coming from.

Julie Andrews once sang about her favourite things.

Some of mine would have to be experiences rather than material things, although I?have had a couple of items that made me smile. One was my 1970 Camaro RS I?managed to get while in high school. Nothing puts a spring in a young man's step like a cool muscle car.

Fast-forward to when my kids were young and our best times were family vacations at the Delawana Inn near Honey Harbour. For more than a decade, we visited this special place and made literally hundreds of memories. I?know our kids cherish those times.

Other faves include hearing my kids laugh, so hard they can hardly breathe. I?have joined in from time to time, laughing so hard, tears ran down my cheeks. This is what happiness is, there's no doubt about it. If we could only bottle the stuff!

As far as food goes, I always have a soft spot for KFC. I?believe it goes back to when my favourite uncle would visit us in Bolton, and he always brought a bucket of KFC?(under \$20 back then).

When asked what I would do differently, I?had to pause and reflect. The only things that spring to mind are to be more frugal with money and more giving with my time.

I would recommend, not to just to my daughter but to everyone, to let go of guilt, pain and sorrow. Life isn't fair and you have to become a really good card player to win some hands. As Kenny?said you have to know when to hold, fold and walk away.

The real kicker is what I?believe is the meaning of life.

In a nutshell, life is about understanding what's all around you ? the air, nature, wind, birds, butterflies and puppies. It's about seeing what was created and gifted to us humans to explore and experience. Life is also about people ? because it's special people who come into your life and help shape you.

It's been said that any experience, which is not written, will be lost in time.

Maya Angelou reminded us that ?there is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.?

I?would encourage every parent and grandparent to jot down some of your fondest memories and best pieces of advice.

Lord knows the next generation is going to need them!