

It's not about winning, just giving it a shot

by MARK PAVILONS

?Not a winner.?

?Please try again.?

Messages like these are abundant as I check my lottery tickets each week.

Lately, I feel they are personally directed right at me, and have some deeper meaning.

Fran Lebowitz once observed that the chances of winning the lottery are identical, whether you play or not.

According to the OLG, your odds of winning the 6/49 jackpot are 1 in 13.98 million. But the odds of winning any prize are just 1 in 6.6. Daunting perhaps, but not by any means impossible.

You have greater chances of being struck by lightning, killed by a meteorite impact or being injured by a toilet.

But we average citizens love winners. We celebrate them and admire them. With elections dominating the news lately, I wonder how people view political winners.

I do have one fond memory of winning. It was a Father's Day trip to Woodbine to bet on the horses with my dad. I placed a bet for him, boxing a triactor, which paid off quite handsomely.

Best day ever.

I may not be a winner, but many argue that wanting to win is the point. You develop strengths through struggles and hardships, according to Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Most agree it's about perseverance, showing up, rising to challenges and not giving up.

Sports metaphors aside, just what does it mean to win in life?

Is it about the journey, about learning along the way? Is it about building character and realizing what's important?

As I look back at my rather humble life, there were times I won, sure. I won a couple of awards in my career and reached some milestones.

I won in terms of finding the love of my life, creating and raising a family. I still find it hard to believe sometimes as I look at my children and utter to myself under my breath "I helped make that!"

I suppose creation, the miracle of life, is the ultimate prize, way better than any gold medal.

Some would argue that creation itself is relatively easy, but when you consider all the microscopic challenges, eddies and currents, it's marvellous. I recently heard that a study revealed that human eggs release chemo-attractants that attract sperm to unfertilized eggs. This suggests that eggs can exert cryptic female choice for preferred males.

Wow. I could make a comment about women making all the household decisions, but I will refrain.

Pythagoras believed that the most momentous thing in life is 'the art of winning the soul to good or evil.'

Does that mean being righteous, good, kind, compassionate, genuine and honest win out over all else? Many would say yes. I bet if you ask anyone what qualities they admire or look for in others, those things rise to the top. I don't think I've ever heard someone say they look for a 'winner' or a 'champion.'

Again, those things are subjective and open to interpretation.

I'm now going to turn my attention to the second opening phrase about 'trying again.' If at first you don't succeed...

We can't relive or rewind our lives. We learn by doing and we make a ton of mistakes along the way. I am not proud of some of my bad decisions. But did I learn from them? You bet!

Some would argue that every day gives up the opportunity to try again, to make new decisions and enjoy new things. Sure, no two days are alike and every sunrise gives birth to new adventures or challenges. That's the nature of existence, I think.

Had I made different choices, would my life have been better? Different, perhaps, but better?

Life is the sum total of all the decisions we make every day. Now, those decisions are determined by many things, including our individual priorities. But trust me, priorities change.

For the longest time, I thought the 'dream job' and material things were paramount. As wisdom teaches us, they are not. When you think about it, instead of a dream job, we should concentrate on a dream relationship or dream family. We should dream about joy.

We humans tend to stress about what might be. Our brains race through all the possibilities and nag us with the negative outcomes. The key is to embrace the positive, but this is not always easy. I know.

We're told to enjoy what is, and what surrounds us, rather than what may be lurking around the next corner. But others may argue that it's uncertainty, the unknown that keeps us on our toes and makes things exciting.

Sure, I'd take the unexpected over the mundane and boring any day. But I would like to know that things will turn out well, and that I will be okay.

Despite our species' technological prowess and medical knowledge, sometimes it's like rolling the dice, only to see snake eyes pop up. We don't think about it on a daily basis, perhaps, but sometimes tragedy, despair, pain and suffering wait for us. They always come.

When faced with an illness like cancer, winning, losing and trying take on a whole new meaning.

Perhaps I win every day that I can get out of bed, go to work and enjoy the fall colours.

Maybe I win by trying.

I'm somewhat at the mercy of my medical caregivers and any treatments deemed beneficial. But there is no fountain of youth, or turning back the clock. There is no backward, only forward.

Is it frightening? You bet. Is it depressing? Sometimes.

Maybe the only thing we can do is try again and again and again.

The option is unsavoury. And just like winning, it's the perseverance, summoning every ounce of strength we have, and then some.

And it's okay to borrow some of that from friends and loved ones, when your tank is running low.

We don't know what tomorrow will bring. But if we think about it as a glorious country drive, and not a race, we may just come out on top!