

It's not always easy to ask for help

by MARK PAVILONS

Ronald Reagan once said that we can't help everyone, but everyone can help someone.

In this third installment of my limited series, I'm going to explore the idea of helping others and ourselves.

My daughter's questions to me were: "Do you ask for help?" "Do you need it?" "If so, how do you plan to get it?"

A lot of things come into play regarding this one.

Many people believe that help and support is just a prayer away. Perhaps. Can't hurt, I figure.

All of us, even the uber-successful, need advice and need to receive help from someone at some point in our lives. It's funny, that we tough, resilient, complicated human beings are needy, and depend on the help of others.

Now, some will argue that they can live a solitary life and they don't need anything from anyone. They're wrong, of course. They still need human contact and social interaction.

Motivational speaker Tony Robbins says there are six main human needs. One of them is contribution - a sense of service and focus on helping, giving to and supporting others.

I find that really interesting. Human beings, who walk around inside their own ego-driven bodies most of the time, feel the need to reach out, help others and show compassion. Some would argue it's in our DNA.

Why?

I suppose some of this inherent sense comes from our early days of evolution. We needed one another just to survive. Ancient civilizations were built on a common need and belief system - village mentality of all for one, and one for all, if you will. That makes sense, and speaks to what our species is capable of when we come together.

Why we veered from this, I have no idea. It may very well be our undoing in the long run.

I have realized, personally, that my weaknesses outweigh my strengths. My brain often works against me, and allows my self-doubt, lack of self-esteem and negativity get the better of me.

I don't think any of it stems from my childhood - I think I had it pretty good. I did well in school and had a strong but small circle of friends.

And yet, there has always been a feeling of being lost and helplessness.

I've never been one to brag about my qualities or accomplishments. Ok, I do tend to tell my family members that I'm quite smart and logical. But my wife is quick to point out that intelligence and book smarts aren't the same as common sense and being street wise. She's right; she often is.

Like most people, I went through my awkward teen years that stretched into my 20s. While outgoing and funny, I tended to be self-conscious and lacked self-esteem. I envied those who breezed through life on their personalities, good looks and charm. To them, things came easy.

For most of us, they did not.

Asking friends and peers for help was out of the question in the '70s and '80s. Even confiding in teachers or parents was limited. When our parents asked us how our days went ? usually around the dinner table ?the stock answer was ?fine,? with few details.

Many days were not fine, but filled with embarrassment, bullying, less than stellar performances on tests and exams. I spent a great deal of my high school days nervous and anxious.

But I never asked for help.

Things improved throughout my college years, as like-minded students gathered to share thoughts, desires and ways to change the world. I encountered many characters who made me smile. I only hope that whenever I cross their minds, I make them smile, too.

Robbins also noted that the ?secret to living is giving,? and those who experience contribution as one of their top six human needs know this better than anyone. ?If you have a need to contribute, you will likely make a big difference in your community.?

Those who have this need tend to fulfill it by giving back, volunteering, mentoring, coaching and just showing up for others.

The closer the cause is to your heart, the more fulfilled you will feel.

Extending a helping hand is one thing, but opening ourselves up and asking for help is quite another.

When we are in need, we tend to be overwhelmed by our own worries and concerns. We don't always recognize that others are standing by, in our corner, ready to pitch in.

I have felt this way many times, often in fact, during my journey with cancer. My family members, while ready and willing to lend their support, can't possibly know what's rattling around in my head, or what I'm feeling on a given day. I don't want to inconvenience anyone, or ruin their positivity.

Truth is, I hate my situation. I am afraid. I am uncertain. I am not in control.

Who can help with any of these things?

I am confronted with an unlimited supply of uplifting quotes, memes, and comments on positive thinking, having a clear mind, and opening up my chakras.

I don't seek help, but I am dependent on the medical community for my survival.

I read about the benefits of this and that, and fill up my medicine bin with a vast array of herbal supplements meant to help combat cancer. I try to let things roll off my shoulders, down my arms and to the floor. I shy away from conflict and anger, but I will admit I have less tolerance these days for stupidity and ignorance.

We often hear the term ?random acts of kindness,? and I find it sad that it needs to be defined that way. Why aren't we committing daily acts of compassion? Why isn't helping one another the top of our list, not resting at the bottom?

So, back to the questions at the outset of this column. Do I need help? Yes ? physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Do I ask for it? No. How do I plan to get it? I don't know.

What a conundrum.