

Leaving a memorable legacy behind

by MARK PAVILONS

We all know our time here on earth is limited ?? mere tick on an endless clock of time.

Sure, humans are among the longest-living creatures on earth and we can accomplish a great deal in the decades we walk the planet. We can also waste a lot of time, and do some damage along the way.

We're not perfect, and seldom are we held accountable for our worst mistakes. Society tends to judge us harshly, and perhaps that's a good thing. They say that "history passes the final judgement" and that only by looking back through the lens of history, can our actions be fully determined.

In this installment of deep questions, my daughter asked me: "How do you want to be remembered?" "What mark do you want to leave on this earth and on your loved ones before you leave?"

Wow, some doozies here to be sure.

Legacy is defined as a "gift," or something passed on from an ancestor or predecessor.

Our legacy is not something we consciously do for ourselves. Rather, it's something we give to the next generation. Leaving a legacy of character, passed on to our children, is key, according to many.

Every person has an impact on the world around them. While it may not be worth noting on a tombstone or in any online epitaph, it's as real as we are.

Are we responsible for living up to past expectations and the legacies given to us? And are we equally responsible for leaving something tangible behind?

Heavy burdens, to be sure.

From touching hearts to educating minds, our gifts can be varied and wide-ranging. Those on the receiving end of our kindness, compassion and assistance will remember.

Most agree that material things are not the most important bequests. Perhaps there's nothing better than helping to shape our children into really good people, who will make the world a better place.

H. Jackson Brown Jr. once said that we parents should live in a way that when our kids think of fairness, caring and integrity, they think of us.

We hope they explore, experience, love and feel joy. We hope they have the intestinal fortitude to face and overcome obstacles. We hope they embrace change, opportunity and one another.

I'm not sure we all constantly think of this, but when we do, perhaps it gives us a tiny sense of immortality. In a way, we all live much longer in the hearts and minds of those who love us.

Other "gifts" to our children are their siblings. When mom and dad are gone, they will still have one another to love, lean on and console.

Our trio will hopefully rely on one another's best qualities to succeed, to share, to achieve. I told them they have a whole lifetime to celebrate one another's milestones ??eddings, children, family gatherings and holidays.

The cycle continues as it always has, and always will.

Kids are like wind-up toy boats placed in a calm pond. Tighten the spring mechanism and let them loose. Watch as they navigate the waters, dashing to and fro. Sure, they will likely bump into things along the way, but ultimately, the ride is a fun one, while it lasts.

Of course, our children grow up quite quickly, almost too quickly. I?blame it on the processed cheese slices and those delicious tiny white donuts.

Our 20-somethings still seem fragile to me. They seldom ask for advice.?Sure, they're quick to ask for favours and other stuff, but advice, na, they think they know better.

I can't imagine being 20 these days, amidst conflict, uncertainty, a high cost of living, and almost unreachable home ownership.

Our eldest is off to the races, and through hard work and determination finished her master's degree and secured a solid job. She has also figured out the secret of a work-life balance and takes time to enjoy the outdoors, yoga, quiet time, reflection and faith.

Our son's head is quite literally filled with so many conflicting thoughts and ideas, I don't how he doesn't just blow. He's in tune with the current political climate, for the first time ever. He's engaged.

He's not a fan of ?working for the man,??and would rather be an entrepreneur. But when I?tell him about all the rules, regulations, bank loans, taxes and consumer fickleness, he's gets dissuaded. While I don't mean to burst bubbles, it's my job as an adult to at least inform him of the pitfalls that await.

No, the current system is not fair, equitable or easy. Navigating the current and future waters will take a lot of skill. I?don't envy them.

As for our youngest, I?really don't know what it's like to be a young woman these days and it's been a few decades since I suffered from angst myself. I do sympathize and try to be supportive.

We have her back.

She's trying to find her way and select an enjoyable and fruitful career path.

Kim and I help, but the world changes constantly, so much so that it's hard to keep up sometimes. For me, being a dad consists of being grumpy and knowing things!

There are so many self-help books, videos and resources available to us. But maybe finding happiness is not our ultimate goal at all.

No, my friends, our ?legacy??is not to have attained fame, fortune or happiness. It's to be useful, responsible, compassionate, empathetic, generous and more. It's about making a difference.

Just think how our society could blossom if we eliminated selfish, greedy pursuits, and concentrated on being better, raising better, contributing more and taking less.

My hope is that our children grasp these humanitarian concepts and carry them forward. They are the future. They may not fully realize the weight they will carry, but they are the movers, shakers, decision-makers, shapers and healers.

I'm not sure if I turned out the way my parents had hoped. It's moot at this point. I don't think I have many regrets and have but a few things left to say and impart.

Is love enough of an impact? I want people to remember me for being honest, genuine and yes, funny. I want people to smile when they think of me. I want my kids to regale theirs with tales of dad's adventures.

Legacy?? Hell ya!