

Let's remove 'nothing' from our vocabulary

by Mark Pavilons

Nothing, rien, nada, nichts, niente, nekas.

It's odd that every language, every culture has many synonyms for 'nothing'.

An interesting word, defined as 'not any thing,' or of 'no interest, value or consequence.'

But we don't have a handle on nothingness or a lack of something. In my opinion, there's no such thing as nothing.

Show someone an empty box and they're likely to say there's nothing in it. But that's not true. Inside this empty space is oxygen, nitrogen, dust particles, maybe some allergens, etc. That's a lot of something, albeit on a very small scale.

What did you do today? Nothing. Really?

If you moved, or just sat there on the couch, breathing in oxygen and exhaling carbon dioxide, then you actually did a lot of something. That whole respiratory process in the human body is filled with miracles and amazing biological functions. Not only that, plants use the CO2 we exhale in their life processes, too.

We have witnessed many amazing achievements at the Olympics this year - personal bests and world records. Ask any athlete if they reach a point where they have 'nothing left to give.' They will tell you they reach even further, and find even more to give, to make it to the finish line. And I firmly believe that no athlete comes away from the Games with 'nothing.' They leave with new experiences, new lessons, new personal insights. Medal or not, they have changed and become better people.

And you can say that about anything in life. Our daily routines may seem boring, mundane, even painful at times. But does a day go by where we learn absolutely 'nothing'?

I've been in the journalism business for more than 30 years and I'm still learning.

I thought I had seen and heard it all, and yet, some weeks bring a flurry of unexpected, never-before-witnessed events, stories and achievements.

People never fail to surprise and impress me. They never fail to do or say something crazy, fascinating, off the wall, unbelievable and incredibly ground-breaking.

Of no interest or consequence? Not at all.

I also love the phrase about teaching an old dog new tricks. It's quite true. Even this old, tired dog learns something new day in, and day out.

It's not that I'm taking up skydiving, or learning fly fishing. New insights, revelations even life-altering emotions, come from all sorts of things. You don't even have to be a willing participant; sometimes really cool things just fall into your lap. It's what you choose to do with it that matters.

My son has a passion for writing lyrics and singing rap music. I've been around more than half a century, so I've been exposed to a lot of music. I embraced hard rock and disco balls, and even smiled at punkers and moved my head to metal heads. But rap? My only recollections of old school rappers were Run-D.M.C. and Grandmaster Flash.

My son introduced me to Eminem and some newer artists.

While it's not my cup of tea, I always keep an open mind and will try everything and anything. Our kids are also embracing our music ? the hits of the 1970s and 1980s.

I believe there is art and beauty in almost everything.

Rap is no different. The lyrics ? Liam's lyrics ? are genuine, emotional and he goes to great lengths to make sure the lines rhyme and mesh together.

I also look at it this way ? I may not totally ?get it,? but it's something I can't do so I appreciate the skill and passion from someone who can.

We toss around the word ?nothing?? way too frivolously. What's that over there?? Nothing! What you hiding?? Nothing! What's in the package you ordered from eBay?? Nothing!

Lies, all lies.

I think we should rid our world of ?nothing,? and make sure every day is filled with ?something.?

It's not that hard and it's fun for all ages.

Every day we rise and shine, climb out of a bed and face the day, we need to do something. We should be active, mentally or physically. We should strive to accomplish just one thing.

I know many motivators suggest creating a visual to-do list so we can stay on track, and monitor our progress.

It's so easy for us to fall into disrepair, and allow our routines to take over and smother us. It's easy to give in to the gremlins in our minds. It's not easy to spring into action, and try to be ?spectacular?? each and every day.

I'm reminded of a Seinfeld episode where George figures out that everything he does is wrong, so he decides to do the opposite of what his intuition tells him. Hmmm. Doing the opposite of what you previously thought. Maybe there's merit in that.

Another cliché is something to the effect of be a better version of yourself each day.

Improve. Do better.

Again, we have to be motivated, or find something that motivates. Our spouses, family networks, friends and co-workers can all be sources of a certain amount of spark. The rest is up to us.

Toss out ?nothing? in favour of ?some indeterminate or unspecified thing.? Let's aim to find something of consequence.

We can learn, or reprogram ourselves and our loved ones.

Think about how encouraged we feel as our young child or new puppy dart around the house in search of adventure. Sure, they will bump into things and even get turned around. They may get preoccupied by a sock or renegade Cheerio, but discovery is a delightful process.

There is always ?something? waiting to challenge, confuse, perplex and thrill us.