

Looking for comfort in all kinds of places

by Mark Pavilons

We humans need comfort?as much as we need food and water.

During the holidays, one specific carol extends tidings of ?comfort and joy.?

Just what is comfort and why is it so import to us humans?

A lexicon defines it as ?a state of physical ease and freedom from pain or constraint? or ?the easing or alleviation of a person's feelings of grief or distress.?

We seek comfort for many reasons, some of which are rooted in survival, security, brain chemistry, and psychological well-being. It's an instinct to seek safety and security, which provide a sense of peace and stability, helps us cope with stress, and is reinforced by the brain's reward system, dishing out the feel-good dopamine.

Being safe and secure tends to relate to being protected from danger, something we all want.

When overwhelmed, who doesn't long for the comfort of the sofa at home, or pulling the blanket over our heads?

Our minds tend to be drawn to ?familiarity,? which breeds comfort. This is especially important for those reluctant to change, or trying new things.

Our comfort can also be tied to emotional security, especially during times of stress, sadness or fear.

Some wonder why our seniors turn to nostalgia more often than not. Well, there's a lot of comfort in the good, old days, times when life was less complicated. While I'm a ?young senior,??I too, long for the lazy, hazy days of summer, tassels on bike handle bars and catching frogs by the pond.

Comfort comes from many sources, including personal connections with family, friends, or pets; physical sensations like warmth from a blanket or a hot drink; routines and emotional support through shared experiences or listening. I find comfort in a relaxing hobby. I love connecting with nature, and finding solace wherever can.

Our kids are still at home, so when we gather, the whole family is together. I?am totally blessed right there. When one is missing ??ust out for the night with friends ??hings just don't feel right.

My mind is crammed with so much these days, I?often get off the hamster wheel and think about painting my tiny model airplanes. Their designs, and tweaking them to my own style, invade my mind.

Shapes, colours and tones distract me, fine-tune my attention and let my imagination soar, far from the ground where my troubles lay.

And who doesn't love their favourite ?comfort food??

Food is much more than nourishment and grabbing that special item or snack, especially when we're feeling frustrated. It almost always hits the spot.

Apparently, experts say being ?comfortable??is the perfect jumping off point for self-improvement and healing.

It can be a foundation to allow us to later contemplate ideas, take risks, and reach higher goals, even though too much can prevent growth.

I've never owned a pair of ruby slippers but I have uttered the phrase "there's no place like home."

There are modern comforts, comfort food, comfy clothes and comfort stations.

One of the first things we do when we get home from work is slip into our comfies - track pants, sweats and even flannel onesies.

We modern humans are spoiled rotten. Our entire lineage of ancestors - going back hundreds of thousands of years - struggled to survive. A cave and a fire were all they had in terms of comfort. Humankind didn't really know true comfort until the creation of indoor plumbing and electricity. And, of course, comfort came into its own with the advent of potato chips, popcorn and frosty, tasty beverages.

I have known comfort, but it is fleeting in this hectic, stressful society we've created.

To me, comfort is always close to home. Relaxing on a patio chair in the back yard on a July afternoon with a beverage soothes my soul, albeit temporarily.

Lately, I can't wait to get home from work and seeing my "babies" - our three dogs. Comfort is relaxing on the sofa, with one of our dogs in my lap. I'm not sure if they're seeking the same thing but perhaps they are. Being close to their human, feeling warm and safe, is what's comforting to them. Snuggled close to their human, they don't have to worry about sudden, loud noises, strangers, doorbells or squirrels.

They give me peace like nothing else. They say having a dog, and petting them daily, extends your life. I'll take every extra hour I can get.

Of course, we can't ignore religion, and the billions of individuals who believe in a higher power.

Religion is comforting because it provides a sense of purpose and meaning, a community of support, and ways to cope with anxiety, stress, and, of course, death. It can offer hope for the future, a belief in a cosmic order, and a framework for understanding and managing difficult life events, which helps people feel more resilient and emotionally regulated.

I've been thinking a lot about a higher power, creation and the afterlife ever since my diagnosis.

The more I learn, the more amazed I am at the unfathomable expanse of the "heavens" above. Trillions of suns, joined by even more planets, existing in perfect harmony and synchronicity.

The more we learn, the more unbelievable it becomes.

To me, all this suggests a plan, a divine sense of order and purpose.

If the All Mighty can create the universe, maybe there's hope for little, old me.

For those facing sickness and death, religion can be a comfort by providing a relationship to a divine being, offering hope for life after death, and assuring a sense of cosmic order.

I will take comfort in any form that comes my way - the arms of my wife, the paws of my pups, the laughter of my children and photos of family members who've since moved on.

Almost always, the greatest comfort is the feeling that you are not alone.

Oh, and let's not forget grilled cheese sandwiches and walking barefoot. Is there anything more comfortable than that?