

Maybe the young ones are paying attention

by Mark Pavilons

We wise adults often remark how the younger generation has a short attention span, blaming 'electronic-everything.' But maybe it's not the length of their attention, but rather providing something worth focusing on.

Sure, there's no shortage of issues these days - more than ample opportunity to raise eyebrows. But the world landscape, even for seasoned pros like parents, is a lot to absorb. It's almost too much.

And maybe that's why some of us - perhaps an entire generation - as tuned out a bit. There's only so much conflict, tragedy and injustice we can handle.

My son gets worked up almost daily, when confronted by something horrible on the news. I'm left trying to explain things to him, without souring his outlook on the world. It's not easy these days.

While I prefer to just be grumpy and mind my own business, his young mind needs food. And I'm bound to offer up the bounty.

I can go into political history with him, explaining how borders and countries came to be. I can even discuss ethnic animosity to a degree. But I can't fully explain human greed, hatred and the lust for power.

Besides, he's well aware of these things from his observations. He asked me recently whether our fellow men and women are just out to screw us, for their own self-interests. Well, hasn't it been that way since we established societies?

Even to Liam, a political neophyte, 'executive orders' south of the border are agenda-driven and are curtailing human rights. He sees them for what they are, but is confused as to why it's happening.

Join the club, buddy.

He's come to the realization that almost every sector of society has its own agenda, or motives.

He pointed out how federal party leaders have 'copied' one another's approach to top issues.

He also questioned whether they will stick to their promises. He wonders whether their intentions are to stay in power, or actually help average citizens.

Oh, boy, politicians and promises. My son has much to learn.

Some online 20-somethings claim they're more self-aware and in touch than us Boomers.

Really? Connected, sure. But self-aware? I dunno.

Again, I think it all depends on their focus. If they spend their free time trying to find the latest fashion trends or footwear, then their 'focus' is quite limited. If they stream headline news and actually listen and analyze what comes out of the mouths of politicians, then they're right on track.

But can we expect them to herald a new age of awareness, based on 'woke' concepts? How do we guide them in their quest to expand their horizons and make sense of the world?

Those are likely questions that parents have been asking themselves for hundreds of years. And I'm not sure just how far we've progressed on that front.

Some say Gen Z is rewriting the rules of society, challenging norms and standing up against injustice. I think every generation does that to a degree. While I wasn't part of 'flower power' or the 1960s peace movement, those young people certainly challenged the norms. And I believe that every generation - including Zs - have that 'free spirit' inside them. That's what makes youth so intriguing.

I wouldn't want to be in my 20s today, but I'd sure step through a magic door, back to the 1980s, when times were much simpler. Anyone up for a time-travelling road trip? I'll bring the beer!

Studies have shown the new 'iGen' - those who had smart phones before losing all their teeth - are growing up more slowly. They seem a bit unprepared for adulthood, preferring to hunker down in the safety of their bedrooms.

When I think of how parents prepare their young, the cartoon version of The Grinch pops into my head. The Grinch lies to Cindy-Lou Who, gives her a glass of water, pats her on the head and sends her on her way. I hope we can do better today.

My son has harnessed his new-found frustration with the 'new world order' by becoming aware of issues. He's encouraging everyone to vote in the upcoming election.

That, in itself, is encouraging, given the historically low voter turnout in elections.

Some say the younger generation is raising activism to new levels. Yes, they have access to much more information than we did, making them informed individuals. They're not jaded like we are. That makes them pretty good judges of character and political motivation. It allows them to clearly see the injustices in the world.

Being aware is one thing, being motivated into action is quite another. We're all guilty of apathy and commenting from the sidelines. Some of us get involved front and centre, while others support causes from behind the scenes.

I was still eager to get in the race and stir some muck until a few years ago when my age caught up with me.

Sure, I can still discuss and debate with the best of them, and offer my own unique insights.

But the drive, the chutzpah to throw caution to the wind, pick up placards and protest is long gone.

There was a time, not that long ago, when conflicts the ones in Ukraine and Gaza, would have been over in weeks, once calmer heads prevailed. That's no longer the case.

Everyone is so critical of everything and everyone's actions and intentions, it bogs down any rational process. Our system is too caught up in appearances, optics and sensitivity that it stumbles into inaction and malaise.

Unless of course you're Donald Trump, who's going gangbusters to rewrite the modern world order into his own reality.

Yes, this too, will pass. But until then, who's up for a tailgate party at the nearest drive-in?