

Mental clutter makes us lose our focus

by Mark Pavilons

A mind may be a terrible thing to waste, but it's also a mysterious enigma that can drive you crazy.

I was basking in the sunshine the other day during my lunch break.

My mind wandered, as minds often do. I thought to myself that I should give my uncle a call to see how he was doing.

The only problem was, he passed away more than 15 years ago. Wow.

The human mind, next to the universe itself, is likely one of the most complex things in our existence.

There's no sense trying to figure it out, we may as well just go with the flow.

I've always had vivid dreams and most involve trying to find a washroom in a busy public place. Like I say, just go with the flow!

Lately, I've been dreaming of a car I once owned, a 1970 Camaro RS. I only had it for maybe two years, during high school and college, before I sold it. Given its rarity today, I should have kept it and had it restored.

My dreams centre around getting the car fixed ? it's always in the shop! Dream after dream, I'm told the car was either stolen, trashed, or needs thousands in repairs.

What gives?

Aside from my Camaro and finding a washroom, most of my dreams feature a getaway of some sort. But I'm always rushing to pack up, trying not to leave anything behind in the hotel room. I always miss something, leaving some gems behind for the next tenants.

Again, what gives?

I'm sure a dream analyst would tell me I have unfinished business with the dearly departed or I have some sort of plumbing problem!

From what I've read, dreams are a way of the brain dusting out the cobwebs, moving thoughts around and finding better spots for our memories, and trashing the insignificant thoughts that fill our heads. It's like clearing your email trash folder at the end of every work day.

In all of my potty problems, I think I've discovered a real-world dilemma. Our minds are so filled with garbage, irrelevant material and useless information that it's getting in the way of our lives.

I should be dreaming of Caribbean beaches, picnics with my beautiful wife, and seeing my kids perform on some international stage. I should be making more room for love and focus on my family. My brain, heart and soul should all be in sync, concentrating on what's important.

So, why isn't it?

?Experts? say many things interfere with our laser-like focus, such as stress, distraction, a lack of motivation, not enough sleep and even burnout.

Okay, so we're overwhelmed and stressed out. But can't our brains handle it?

I read that our blobs of grey matter can process as much as 400 billion bits of information per second.

However, even our heads are limited, and we can fully understand only 1% of what we take in.

Still, that's likely a lot of stuff. Why isn't there room for those big hugs?

Others say we're spending too much time in our own heads. That's funny because that's all we can do, confined to these bio shells of ours. We can't leap out of our heads and mentally connect with others, or read each other's thoughts.

But what they're getting at is many factors today are making our heads a busy, annoying place to be.

Working from home, recent solitude and perhaps loneliness, all force us deeper inside. Less small talk, human interaction and more stress push our little buddies back into those dark recesses of our minds.

Sure, it would be great if we could all release all that mental noise and eliminate the useless chatter. Life would be better if we focus on someone else, other than ourselves.

My wife often tries to correct my 'bad behaviour'. They're really bad habits that we all fall into. Unlike Pavlov's pets, repetition doesn't seem to work on yours truly. I can't seem to figure out what that ringing bell is telling me!

I will stack the Tupperware properly one week, and then totally destroy the cabinet the next. I will put the empty sweetener packets in the trash for a couple of weeks, then totally forget. I can't for the life of me remember to switch the drain plugs when doing dishes in the sink. It has taken a pandemic to get me to wash my hands regularly!

What she calls a lack of consideration, I call a mumble jumble of thoughts that plague my overloaded brain. Yes, I respect her wishes, but heck I can't even find a bathroom in my thoughts! How hard is that; they're everywhere!

I don't think my consciousness was so clogged a decade ago. Maybe the current state of our marbles has to do with the mountains of giga-stuff thrown at us day in and day out. From dealing with vaccines and restrictions on our freedoms, to job security and a mine field of financial stressors, it's just too much.

It's far too late for my sanity. My wife comments she's at her wit's end, but we kissed those good-bye a long time ago!

So, along with lost wits, too many bits in our heads, just what are we to do?

I'm not a physician or personal trainer. The only advice I can offer is to try to seek solace and try to separate the chatter from the clutter, savouring the meat next to the bone. Okay, so I have food on my mind, too!

If only we could isolate thoughts of love, joy, togetherness and understanding, we'd be better off. Who doesn't want to be one step closer to being on an even keel, not just with ourselves, but with those closest to us?

Tame the mainsail, second star to the right and straight on 'til morning, I say!