

Our children are our ultimate legacy

by Mark Pavilons

There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children. Nelson Mandela

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.

There are many lasting bequests we can pass on to our kids. All we can do is try, and hope that we give them the qualities, characteristics and moral fibre to be decent, contributing members of society.

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.

We time-limited humans often talk about leaving a legacy heirlooms that are both tangible and intangible.

I'm not sure why we feel this way, other than 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.

I recently heard a great line from a TV show that indicated our best gift 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, weddings, 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 seldom ask for advice. Sure, they're quick to ask for favours and other stuff, but advice, na, they think they know better.

My oldest daughter told me recently, she's an entrepreneur, a self-made woman who has to make her own destiny. She is juggling a couple part-time gigs, while trying to pursue her career options. She takes courses, she learns, she expands her horizons.

Like Bigweld from that great animated film Robots, she sees a need, fills a need.

So far, she's doing well, and good for her.

She has also made some very strong bonds with friends from high school through university. I have no doubt these friendships will last a lifetime.

My highschooler wrapped up a challenging year and it's evident that the middle teen years can be tough ones. There are so many

selfies to take!

I really can't comment on what it's like to be a young woman these days and it's been a few decades since I suffered from teen angst myself. I do sympathize and try to be supportive. We have her back. And she has good friends and that is valuable these days. Hopefully the bonds she's made will last.

My young man child is an interesting soul. He's smart as a whip (I wonder where he gets that from?) and absorbs information like a sea sponge. He casts a critical eye on society and its current limitations. He's not a rebel, but he's definitely one to go against the grain and maybe even buck convention.

Some great people in our history were just like that.

Kim and I help, but the world changes constantly, so much so that it's hard to keep up sometimes.

There are so many self-help books, videos and resources available to us. But maybe finding happiness is not our ultimate goal at all. It's like digging for gold your entire life and coming up empty.

We spend too much time counting money, calories and the minutes and hours that make up our days. How much time do we spend counting our blessings?

No, my friends, our purpose is not to seek out 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.

We only play a small part in all of that. Sure, we gave them life, something we love to throw in their faces when they upset us. And thanks to our high-end DNA they have some great internal ingredients. We pass on what we know and some of the qualities we wish we had ourselves.

We give them a head start and maybe, if we're good, we give them hope.

I can't take much of the credit in our three little ducklings. They got the best stuff from their mom.

I sometimes shed a tear at sad movies or TV shows when characters bid farewell to their parents on their deathbed. I never had the chance. In each case of losing a family member, I arrived shortly after their ascension.

I don't think I have many regrets and I didn't leave anything unsaid. My parents may not have been the smartest, richest and most successful, but they did pretty well, if you ask me. I admit that I learned some very good, fundamental lessons from them, along with a good work ethic, sense of honesty, humility, love of family, love of nature and well, just plain love.

Loving our kids ain't always easy. But it's vital. And, in the end, they'll thank us for it.

Legacy, hell ya!