

# Pumping the gas to get the old guy started

by MARK PAVILONS

?It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver.? ??ahatma Gandhi

It's really true that without good health, we have nothing.

Or almost nothing.

We have our friends, families, and years of experience and wisdom.

But it's funny how relatively healthy people are walking around, doing what we do, and then bam! Like they say, you feel like you've been hit by a truck when you get unexpected news.

In my experience, these hit-in-the-face moments are typically associated with large car repair bills. Or news of someone else getting sick.

Often, we don't get the wake-up call until something happens.

There is plenty of information and data available pointing to the prevalence of heart attack, stroke, diabetes, cancer, asthma and a host of mental health issues. Many can be identified and treated.

Others go undetected for possibly years.

And there's the shovel in the face.

How can a seemingly healthy person, with no unusual symptoms, ailments or aches or pains, have major health problems?

Hey, I offer praise to the All Mighty for creating an amazing human machine, but some warning would be nice.

A recent ECG ? my first in over a decade ??howed an abnormality. I?love it how health professionals use non-descript terms. What does that mean??I?asked.

Off to a cardiologist, who explained there were signs of a heart issue.?A follow-up echocardiogram showed nothing ??ell not Tin Man nothing ??ut nothing of concern. I'm left scratching my head.

Weeks of anxiety, fear and Googling got me on a new heart-health journey. Of course, there's nothing wrong with pulling up one's socks and giving your body a break.

The holiday period was hectic enough and I remember thinking I?don't have time for this crap, along with the other issues on my plate.

But I have to make time, if I want to spend a few more decades of relative good health on this planet.

It's funny, you know, how worked up we get when faced with a challenge. We all know we should have treated our bodies a bit better and perhaps we should have refrained from all those tequila shots in our 20s and 30s. Maybe it was the aspartame or Cap'n Crunch cereal. Potato chips??I've likely eaten several tonnes!

Maybe it's just life. Diet and exercise ??hose two key words ? have been drilled into us for more than 100 years now.

And if we're lucky, we can try to accomplish those two things, from time to time. But every day??Or even three times a week?

Alas, my job has involved sitting in front of a computer screen several hours per day. Who knows what my body has absorbed. I love it when I can actually dart out of the newsroom to a real, in-person event and meet some fellow humans.

But regular exercise?

I do chores and yard work and sometimes walk the dogs. But most of my sweating comes from eating spicy chicken wings or Jamaican beef patties.

Okay, maybe that does have something to do with my heart.

Why are life's best offerings so bad for us? Why can't French fries and potato chips be ?just what the doctor ordered?? How can fast food be turned into fast health food?

But then again, maybe it comes down to genetics and evolution. My parents were from strong European stock. They both lived just shy of 80 and worked hard all of their lives. My sister, on the other hand, didn't make her 50th.

I?hear there are genetic tests you can get that will tell you just what you're susceptible to, and even when you're going to expire! No thanks on that one.

Who would want to know that??Okay, it's not much of a trade-off that some of us are walking around like ticking time bombs either.

I remember my mom telling me when my aunt dropped dead walking down the sidewalk during her lunch hour one day. It was a shock to everyone.

And perhaps even diet and exercise can't combat the genetic demons or malignant cells that roam our bodies.

Born to die?

We complain about this, that and the other, and yet we don't always take preventive measures.

I know too much of anything is bad for me. I should cut down on salt, artificial sweetener and soda. I should eat leafy green veggies, smothered in even more leafy green veggies.I have begun a new regime, born out of fear and some suggestions from my first born, who's working on her yoga instructor certificate.

As I rode the stationary bike in our unfinished basement, I pedalled to Alphaville's ?Forever Young,? noting I?too, don't want to perish like the seahorse. I didn't even know they were endangered.

I was never much of a ?zen??person, but did admire the hippies of the 1960s. I?still love tie-dye.So, with calming sounds babbling like a brook from my computer at work and a few minutes of meditation, I'm feeling more relaxed.

Some time on the stationary bike at home may start to show results.

I'm alcohol-free for a while, and I've cut down on salt and butter.

I always set aside time each day for a good hearty laugh. My family members often wonder what the heck I'm giggling at to myself.

I'm beginning to realize this old clunker is depreciating. But I'm taking advice from my wife and family, and I'm still smiling and remaining positive. As long as I start every morning, I'm blessed.

How about you?