

Putting the zeal back in our zucchinis!

by Mark Pavilons

They say approaching life with copious amounts of positivity is soul-cleansing.

It not only puts the spring in your step, but actually improves your physical health.

Most of us are bombarded by uplifting quotes, memes and photos about having a positive outlook. Many people swear by them.

For me, it's a bit of a battle, a Catch-22. I?realize all of the goodness that's possible, but I'm weighed down by dread and an uncertain future.

I've partially made my peace with cancer and my fate, thinking about the wonders of the universe and the potential miracles of creation and everlasting energy that may lay ahead.

It's all speculation of course, and a little bit of faith.

I suppose the reality is it all comes down to two choices ? to whine, cry and sulk, or be as upbeat as possible, enjoying the sunshine of each new day.

Who wouldn't want to be constantly cheery and always spectacular?

I?will admit that even in the hardest chores, financial burdens and life challenges, there are tiny tidbits of movement and progress. We're not stagnant but always on the move, physically, mentally and emotionally.

Since our brains and bodies have the ability to accept and embrace positivity, why not invite it in more often?

We may all agree on this particular game plan, but the key is how to draft these invitations and keep the door open to the pleasantries that blow in, carried on summer's wings.

Seeing the sunshine lately is like a miracle. It's no secret that sunshine and vitamin D can excite our minds and bodies. It's like the gas in our lawnmowers or water in our sprinklers.

I?love summer and try to enjoy every minute our life-giving sun smacks me in the face. It's like food for the soul.

Despite our vast knowledge, huge amounts of common sense messages, sound medical advice and nutritional facts, we tend to ignore our souls, our inner being. That needs just as much nourishment, if not more, than our bodies.

We have so much at our disposal that there's really no excuse for not treating ourselves well.

We are the most important person in our lives.

Recently, someone suggested that in all the hustle and bustle, in between blood work and scans, errands and responsibilities, that I should treat myself to something nice. I?scoffed at the suggestion.

With a mortgage, three dogs and three adult children at home, pampering myself is seldom, if ever, in the equation. I did use my Father's Day gift cards to splurge on some tiny trinkets.

My daughter gave my wife and I a gift card for an Airbnb and hopefully we can plan a night away soon.

We always plan a date night, or dinner out together, but life has a habit of getting in the way of our best-laid plans.

We shrug it off, believing we can catch up or make up for it later. I think that line of thinking is what is hindering our society today. What if something happens and later becomes never?

Oscar Wilde said living is the rarest thing in the world; most people just exist. But Oscar didn't have to deal with tariffs or high grocery prices.

Rick Steves recommends that we be fanatically positive and militantly optimistic.

I kind of like Amanda Gorman's analogy that only when we're drowning do we understand how fierce our feet can kick.

I envy those who can enjoy cloudy days, knowing the sun will eventually come out. I am jealous of those who've come out a different, improved version of themselves after fighting some fierce battles.

I will admit that I'm a bit fatigued from the battle, but the war is not lost, not by a long shot.

Despite what happens to us, we are still empathetic and compassionate beings.

In public, I go out of my way to be pleasant to others, masking my own pain. At home, I'm a bit of a grouch, but I'm hoping to continue to grow.

I've tried not to let the world's bitterness steal my smile, laugh or sense of humour.

A recent visit to my oncologist once again tested my positivity. My PSA is up again, but nothing to be alarmed at, yet. We discussed upcoming scans and possible next steps.

My wife, always the bright, calming influence, tried to ensure I was on an even keel, and that things will work out.

Well, my own personal Shakespearean tragedy will play out as it must, as it was designed to do.

Not as written by William, but penned by the Almighty, edited by my own troublesome DNA.

I was surprisingly upbeat, knowing that I no longer expect to hear miraculous news. A slow progression is the best I can aim for.

Our daughter earned her Masters Degree at York and her convocation was a reminder how exciting it is to be young, facing your future with a mountain of positivity. It was refreshing, almost as much as Lexie's smile that day. She will go far!

With the good weather upon us, I can now stretch my legs and get some exercise, just like the doctor ordered. Reducing stress, drinking plenty of water and improving my diet will all help.

Funny, those same directives were given by doctors for thousands of years.

I wonder what green leafy vegetable aids in positivity? What grain fosters the production of zeal? How do I put on a happy face as I slip on my sandals?

I will enjoy evening strolls with my wife and dogs, sucking in every fragrant breeze that blows my way. I will try to alter my lifestyle and reduce stress to a minimum.

I?may not light up a room as I?enter, but I?do plan shining a bit brighter. Any suggestions?