

Rewriting my ever-changing guide book

by MARK PAVILONS

It's been a while since I put pen to paper with my inner-most thoughts.

I typically have a keyboard ??irtual or physical ??t my disposal for these things.

It's not always easy to come up with new, informative and enjoyable subjects for my weekly rants. But I try.

It was a struggle recently as I sank into a bit of a funk, a kind of new year cloudiness.

As the world gets even more troublesome, we hide in the comfort of our own homes and pleasant surroundings not impacted by hate, conflict or political unrest.

I tried to find distractions of all sorts, from Facebook reels to uplifting quotes and even favourite songs. None provided any solace at all, despite a few smiles and even a couple of tears.

I thought maybe it's time to rewrite my personal ?job description,? my six-decade-long curriculum vitae that describes my life as a husband, father and human being. Where to start?

There's way too much for a chronological account of my growth, achievements, highs and lows.

There's also way too many tattered suitcases (baggage) from my early adventures.

I never buried a treasure chest or time capsule, containing trinkets for my future self. It never seemed relevant.

As a youngster, I never gave much thought to my future self. In high school and even entering college, I still couldn't see myself in the future, being a responsible professional, an adult ready for the world.

At times, I still don't. I feel like I'm 30, with the sense of humour of a teenager and yet I bear the scars, aches and pains of an older man.

So, here I am. I made it up another flight of stairs, another rung in the never-ending wobbly ladder. For better or worse, I have arrived and each new day is another opportunity to do well, love, embrace hope and joy.

We will all have to ?shuffle off this mortal coil? as the Bard once wrote, but until that day comes, we have all the power to summon up newness ? new courage, new fortitude and a new hope. But does that mean we have to become new ourselves? It's pretty hard for humans to become ?new and improved? like our infomercial products. But we can create a new journal and jot down some new thoughts for this road map of our new direction.

We are smart enough to get in from the cold and keep ourselves warm and safe from the frightful weather outside. We can excel in both our professional and personal lives, given enough wiggle room.

So, let's start with the new ?Men's Guide for Evolving Dummies,? or ?Practical Maleness for Changing Times.?

There are so many books, programs and virtual exercises for men to become better husbands and fathers. According the latest that's come across my smart phone, Man on Fire says we need to reclaim our power and potential, to shed that feeling of helplessness.

It's a consciousness, and awareness of our purpose in life. It's coming full circle with who you are, and what you want to become.

We all live with regrets and I'm sure we all want to reignite that spark, that flame that had driven us in the past.

As a suitor and newly married man, I was on my best behaviour and put my wife Kim on pedestal. Boy, does she miss those days.

Am I less caring, loving and romantic than I used to be? In terms of romantic gestures, yes. We males express our love and devotion in many ways and being a rock and go-to guy is one way.

Providing for the family, through thick and thin, is one of our mandates, perhaps an outdated one passed on by the previous generation.

Most households include dual breadwinners and it's a team effort, not one-sided. We rob Peter to pay Paul and we share expenses as best we can. At times, we all come up short, but that's when our shoulders broaden and we carry the extra weight.

It's like trudging through mud up to our shins, pushing to get ahead. We can celebrate when we pull ourselves out, even if we have to leave a boot behind.

Unfortunately, the trenches aren't getting any easier to navigate and the hurdles keep coming. Toss in a few sleepless nights, errands, car repairs, sudden expenses and mayhem rears its ugly head again and again.

But maybe that's something I need to reimagine and re-focus. Perhaps blowing on the embers of that forgotten spark will not only start a fire in me, but in my wife, too.

There was a time when it was just us and we could face anything together. We laughed and explored and experienced.

Perhaps the new chapters will include reflecting on the love we share, reveling in that, and only that.

The verses on parenting are always unfolding anew. Our early parenting days are but a blur and our children are now 25, 22 and 18.

I have gone from dotting dad and floor-level motivator to wise, old owl. They still marvel at the fountain of information I have locked away in my nogging, but I fear some of it is now irrelevant or no longer applicable. The pendulum of the world has swung so far that there is still much to learn and understand.

The love I have for my children is not a mushy, feely marshmallow kind of fondness. It's more of a life coach, professional career counsellor and problem-solver. Dads try to fix things and yet my wife says I simply need to be more present, in the moment with them, empathizing their plight.

This part of the guidebook will need a lot of tweaking, just as it did through every previous phase of our children's development.

Parenting is a full-time job that never stops, wanes or eases. We continue to put the children first, and enjoy what's left for ourselves.

We are always doing.

It's unfortunate that many things in our lives have become chores and not pleasantries.

I aim to revisit the footnotes and index of this book of mine. Perhaps these will hold some gems for me to call upon as we brave the future.

Use the ink wisely, my friends!