

Searching far and wide for our ?Place?

by MARK PAVILONS

I'm exhausted.

But not too tired to run up that hill one more time, hand in hand with my ?Jill.?

But we'd leave our pails ??and all that they contain ? behind for others to fill.

I?imagine, once we reach the summit, it opens up to a picture-perfect meadow, with a Disney-esque log cabin, sans dwarves.

There, my wife and I?would find a nice grassy knoll and sit a while. We would talk and share memories about all the roads we took to get there. But we wouldn't look back down the hill. Why bother? We're here now, closer to the sun. It's a place where the flowers never wither and the seasons never change. It's always sunny, with a gentle breeze that reminds us how beautiful things can be. The winds carry the scents of all the things ? amazing meals, suntan lotion and camp fires ? that we've enjoyed together. It's like a catalogue of joy swirling all around us. The rainbows that exist here, in this place, are humble. They shine, regardless of who's watching and why.

But this isn't real. It's a picture painted in my mind when idle thoughts reign. But if I can conjure up such a magical place, does it not exist in some way, shape or form?

Aw, there's the key.

The word that comes to mind is ?peace.?

Peace of mind, a calmness of spirit. Is such a feeling attainable?

Some say anger is the enemy of peace of mind. Every minute we spend in turmoil is 60 seconds we give up being peaceful.

Perhaps tranquility is the new happiness. Do we not seek a quiet, harmonious, even mellow, mental and emotional state?

I'm not talking about sunken in the sofa eating Cheetos kind of quietness. I'm talking about true, undisturbed, focused, unruffled composure.

From that, anything is possible. It's a jumping off point to joy.

How do we go from agitated and turbulent to restful and still? How does one move from broken and shaken to an almost euphoric easiness?

I?suppose our species has been asking itself those very questions for hundreds of years. It seems so simple and straightforward, this search for serenity. ?But why is our hunt for this stillness so difficult and why is the ?hush??so elusive?

Sure, the world is a very noisy and clamorous place, thanks to the people and things in it. But it wasn't designed that way.

Was it not once ?Eden,? where gardening and being one with the animals were our only chores? We just had to eat the fruit, and learn the difference between good and evil, didn't we?

We are no longer naive enough to believe in utopia or Shangri-La. But does that mean we've been robbed of bliss and no longer

anticipate Cloud Nine or the Promised Land?

Paradise is described as not only a place, but the 'absence of evil.' Oh, if only such a locale existed here on earth.

George Harrison once said that only when you've seen beyond yourself can you find peace of mind.

Diving much deeper, Abdullah Ibrahim shared these thoughts: 'When time and space and change converge, we find Place. We arrive in Place when we resolve things. Place is peace of mind and understanding. Place is knowledge of self. Place is resolution.'

Let that sink in for a moment.

Is my 'Place' the one I described at the outset of my column? Or perhaps something similar?

That quiet hilltop retreat could be a reflection of what my heart contains. That meadow could very well be a cottage, a hotel balcony, or even a lounge chair by the pool. It can be the smell of our kitchen, getting ready for a family meal.

It can be the combined laughter from the clan as we share a joke or fond memory.

It can be cheese and crackers or wings, chips, fresh-baked cookies or pie straight from the oven.

These things will take you aloft, like Peter Pan, and carry you away to your safe, childhood place.

Call it what you will 'ur 'Place' may include feelings of calmness, serenity, tranquility, and contentment, in contrast to feelings like exuberance, ecstasy, or euphoria. We all search for inner peace.

A study (Demirci & Eksi, 2018) revealed the top qualities or conditions that foster inner peace. Tops were virtues, trust, acceptance, spirituality, optimism and yes, financial stability.

The holidays didn't leave us with much in the way of breathing space to stop and rest, and take in the sights and sounds of the festive season.

Ideally, we all had a chance to gather with friends and family and break bread, share thoughts and spread hope for some good things to come in 2026.

Perhaps, if we take out our Google Maps, we can find an existing or new Place to call our own.

Or maybe it's much simpler than that. Perhaps it just means looking around the room at those gathered and feeling the warmth. Extending a hand in welcome or thanks; sharing a meal; just rekindling.

Our spirits definitely need a top-up, not just at special times of the year, but all year long. Like consistent oil changes on our cars, we need regular maintenance.

I hope you all receive it!

'Whatever we are waiting for ' peace of mind, contentment, grace, the inner awareness of simple abundance ' it will surely come to us, but only when we are ready to receive it with an open and grateful heart.' ' Sarah Ban Breathnach