

Staying connected to the ?great mystery?

by MARK PAVILONS

I?recently urged my son to apply his somewhat green thumb to growing mushrooms.

Not your basic fungi, but those thousand-dollar specimens sought by fancy restaurants. Truffles can cost upwards of several thousand per pound. That's what I'm talking about!

How hard can it be to raise and sell a fistful of these beauties?

Turns out, very hard. But as they say, if it were easy, everyone would be doing it.

It seems my boy is under pressure ? to get active, busy and earn money. After all we westerners believe that generating wealth is some sort of gauge of people.

Mistake number one.

And yet, our young people, in record numbers, are graduating, and taking ?gap years??to figure things out. Even armed with hard-earned degrees, finding those dream jobs is not easy.

And just what is a dream job??What field, or industry moves along effortlessly, unhindered by the economy, making everyone rich?

Not all of our young want to be accountants, bankers, lawyers, brain surgeons or politicians.

It's somewhat disheartening, as a parent, to watch our kids go through this.

We do our best to help them. We set aside money for college or university; help them in their courses; encourage them to experience life, and always tell them to do what they love and grab life by the tail.

Is that enough these days??I don't think so.

As a Boomer, once we hit our mid-20s, we got an itch to move out and be on our own. We didn't care if we only ate KD and watched a black and white TV. We had jobs and that was enough to cover our essentials.

But with today's rents, cost of living, transit, cars, car insurance and yes, groceries, it's an uphill climb.

The pressure to just make it outweighs the need to move out and move on.

The world applies enough pressure to our young, we don't need to add to it. But it's often hard to hold our tongues.

While we'd all love to be 21 again, none of us would want to ?start over??in this day and age.

In our house of five, and four dogs, it's seldom still. Like Oz, people come and go so quickly here!

My wife is a whirlwind, keeping the cogs well-oiled. With two jobs, she's often overburdened.

But she doesn't know how to chill. Perhaps she's reluctant to ?press pause? for various reasons. They say that when you're idle or relaxing, you're alone with your thoughts. Some us can shelve them, but others can't. I'm an expert chiller, but constantly bickering

with myself in my own mind is not a healthy pastime.

Meditation aside, how do we calm an overactive mind, brought about by our hectic lifestyle?

According to Andrea Menard, author of *Seeds from the Sacred Feminine: A 52-Card Wisdom Deck with Handbook*, we have to be in tune with our sacred masculine and feminine sides.

Take a moment to breathe and stop the whirlwind, says Menard. When was the last time you sat still for more than 20 minutes?

Your sacred self waits for your moments of stillness to emerge. Be still and remember who you are. In the silence, feel your connection to the Great Mystery.

When is the last time anyone of us, regardless of our beliefs, felt any connection to the Great Mystery?

During the past year, and my experience with cancer, I have longed to believe in such a mystery.

I have tried to find solace in stillness and prayer.

I wish science had risen to the point where we could just pluck out negative thoughts and feelings, and replace them with good ones. Wouldn't that be amazing?

Of course, we'd put all the supplement and pharmaceutical companies out of business.

Some, like Menard, suggest writing down your thoughts and take up journaling.

I tend to express myself through this very column, and little bits of me constantly float to the surface for all to see. I find this therapeutic, and sorry to burden you with you my woes, but maybe you share some of my sentiments.

Menard points out, when you surround yourself with living things, you become more alive too.

Gardening, tending to plants, etc. all help in this regard. I suppose tending to our four-legged family members works, too.

There is great healing in the Earth Realm, says Menard.

There is much more to this planet of ours than we know. I have come across some fascinating articles on just how physically connected the flora and fauna are in our world. Symbiotic relations abound in the plant kingdom and this is not random but by design. I have learned that some tree root systems stretch for miles, literally boosting all others they encounter underground.

Incredible.

I think we'd all love to bring some calmness into the chaos around us. Some of it we can't control the economy, running errands and our work environments. But at home, we should be able to instill some serenity.

Menard suggests this involves tossing material things, objects that we don't really need. She says we're not meant to hold on to physical objects that no longer serve you.

Release your hold on the stuff and feel the relief rise in your chest. You are free again. Remember the ways of your ancestors and pare your life down to the basics. Use only what is necessary. Allow your wealth to flow to someone who needs it more than you.

And yet here we are, settling in after a taxing gift-giving season. I can just imagine the piles of material things that may remain

untouched, and not needed.

I have constantly told my family that my needs are simple. A few toys to play with; a collectible or two to admire; some laughs; home-cooked meals and the occasional beverage.

At this stage of my life, should I come into untold wealth, I would still not buy fancy clothes, luxury cars or Swiss watches. Those days, those desires, are gone.

Plop me in the middle of a Zen garden with an umbrella in my drink and I'm good to go.

Namaste.