

# Unclench and enjoy the simple pleasures

by Mark Pavilons

Imagine this: a man and his dog, sitting on a sidewalk bench on a pleasant Saturday afternoon. The little pup, whose adventures in the real world are limited, stayed close by the man's side, watching as each car and person passed by.

It was a lot for the little one to take in.

For the man, he held his pup tight and enjoyed the warm breezes. He soaked up the "incredible lightness of being." The man was reminded of other pleasant bench experiences, mostly with his best half watching boats inch by in the channel at their favourite resort.

It's funny how a somewhat uneventful moment can be so fulfilling. It may have been a picture-postcard scene, but there was no one to capture it, or even make some quick sketches.

Everyone who passed by seemed busy, on a mission to this place or that, despite the fact the bench was on the main street of Tottenham.

The man was relaxing, as men tend to do. The pup most likely experienced sensory overload, seeing cars, motorcycles and other humans dash to and fro.

She did not care much for this noisy world of humans. Why would the man take her to such a place, she must have thought to herself.

And what the heck was that place where other dogs barked, whined, and got stuck with needles?

All the head-tilting in the world won't answer those questions.

A world without dogs is like a world filled with pain. And even so, there's still lots of that to go around.

I grind my teeth because of what's to come. And I sob quietly to myself at night because of what's been.

So, what to feel in between the clenching and the crying? Fear, ya, and maybe a bit of self-loathing at my imperfections and faults. Yes, I know that's not very productive.

Mind you, it didn't all happen all on its own. Oh, no, it took years to incubate, nurture and let loose on the world. But at times it feels much worse than finding a hair in your soup. It's more like an age-old family recipe that has gone terribly wrong, despite using all the right ingredients. It's really not fair to set us frail, often unprepared humans into the world all on our own, unsupervised and all.

All of our previous knowledge and wisdom was passed down by our ancestors, through stories, photo albums, written works and the DNA of subsequent members of the lineage along the way.

We arrive, quite literally vulnerable and afraid. Just when does that feeling leave us?

I watch our two new puppies grow, learn, and experience new things every day. Almost everything is new to them. It's really cool to watch sometimes.

Most of us can't remember being really young children. My first clear memories go back to kindergarten, pushing around a cart

filled with pilfered plastic produce. I was a bit of a terror and class clown, even at that age.

Just where did my penchant for tomfoolery come from? My parents were mostly sombre folks and sure we laughed and played, but they didn't have side hustles as clowns or anything.

No, that talent came from yours truly, all on his own.

It's funny because until you have little ones of your own, you can't really watch, in real time, the progress, growth and evolution of young ones into older ones.

My memory is a bit fuzzy when it comes to our kids' pre-school years. Even first steps and first words escape me.

But my wife Kim recalls a million little things with a clarity only a mother possesses.

When our now grown kids act a certain way, Kim can recall the first arrival of such characteristics when they were tots or pre-teens.

Me, I never had much patience for the crafting end of things. I much preferred the finished product, even if it required touch-ups.

That rings true whether it's building model planes or molding children. Of course, they're both interesting and exciting journeys, filled with twists and turns.

Right now, we are the rule-setters and boundary makers for our pups. We try to act stern, but they have that look in their eyes like ?ya okay, but I'll do it again.?

They are starting to grasp some fundamentals in their new surroundings, but they are still intent on gobbling their food, racing around given the chance, and play fighting on a level seen in the UFC.

I?realize a lot of a dog's behaviour is inherent and instinctive, things passed down for literally generations, embedded in their DNA.

I doubt the two new additions will need to take down a hyena any time soon, but they do look ready!

Simple needs. Simple pleasures.

If only our lives could be the same.

If you boil it all down, our wants and needs can be whittled down. We can simplify.

Simple pleasures are all around us ??ve seen and felt them.

During the Father's Day weekend, I?perched myself outside, feeling the sun and breeze on my face. It was like a slow-working cocktail, awakening feelings, emotions and memories of just chilling.

Life should be about very simple choices. Like the famous Kung Fu Master Oogway once said:??Quit.?Don't Quit.?Noodles. Don't noodles. You are too concerned with what was and what will be.?You can veer left, or stay right. You can choose, and you can refrain from making a choice.

You can grind your teeth and sob, or you can look into your puppies' eyes and get a new perspective.

Do chores, get cracking at the grill, or just chill in an egg chair or hammock.

Do whatever unclenches that jaw!