

Waiting in worry is an unhealthy pastime

by MARK PAVILONS

Worry is like a worm eating the best parts of your favourite, freshly picked apple.

He is satisfied, you are not.

When we humans exchange pleasantries, we often wish someone good health. Without that, happiness is fleeting, maybe even non-existent.

When you get bad news ? the worst of the worst ? you get that weird warm rush from head to gut. Then a hollowness follows, an unusual empty feeling despite enjoying that muffin an hour or so ago. I've felt it more times than I care to remember.

I've been plagued with worry most of my life. From social interactions in high school; college tests and exams; interviews, the list goes on.

Worry is likely the worst of human qualities ?a lot of wasted energy and angst.

When I was young, I could never picture myself later in life ? married with kids, graying and eventually bouncing grandkids on arthritic knees.

And yet, my bride was the most beautiful thing on earth on our wedding day. She still is.

We decided to have a family and while babies are born every day, each comes with plenty of worry. In fact, parental worry never ends.

Our ?kids? are now adults ? 26, 23 and 18. I still lose sleep thinking about their physical and mental health, and their futures in this crazy world.

I also laid several family members to rest, one before her time. Tears were shed but there are always more in reserve.

It's been 14 years since I said farewell to my mom. I sometimes dream of her, my dad and my sister. But these nocturnal kaleidoscopes seldom offer much in the way of miracles, messages or secrets. They never explain the meaning of life or how to eliminate worry. Some believe these are important ?visits??from the hereafter.

A recent dream had me reciting a rather long poem, that turned into a badly sang song. The gist of it was a message to those assembled around me: ?it was always meant to be me. It had to be me.?

This sentiment puzzled me and stuck in my head like so many of those musical earworms. What does it mean and why did those very words emerge from my starry night thoughts?

We look at things from the inside out, from our own personal vantage point. We are always in our own driver's seat, accelerating, braking, turning and swerving. Alas, in dreams, no matter how hard I press the gas, I can't seem to make the light ahead in time.

We are all inside our own heads. Mine is somewhat complicated. Picture one of those kids toys ? the push mower (Corn Popper) with the balls inside a clear dome that bounce around as the gizmo operates. While there was a time I found this amusing, it's now just a jumble of thoughts and emotions, all disjointed and colliding with one another.

We all wrestle with our mortality at one point, usually when confronted with an illness.

Ok, cancer isn't necessarily a death sentence, but the journey requires everything you have and more. It requires skills, technology and knowledge of medical practitioners. We place our faith in them that they know exactly what to do and how to 'cure' us. For anyone who watches TV medical dramas, you realize they are just people with human frailties themselves. But they do have procedures, plans, meds, scans and all sorts of invasive and non-invasive measures to try.

Together we have hope.

While I have hope, worry tends to overshadow all things bright. Call me a skeptic or doomster, but I tend to expect the worst. I figure that way, if the outcome is positive, great. If it's just what I expect, I'm not surprised.

That's not the healthiest approach to things. And I'm paying for it in terms of anxiety and reflux.

My cancer journey is beginning anew. A recent PET'scan found more prostate cancer. With this newest challenge, 'Mr. Worry Wart' is in constant high gear.

I met just yesterday (Wednesday) with my new oncologist, to presumably plan another treatment, this one including chemotherapy. With chemo, I suppose it's a case of 'no pain, no gain.'

Am I capable of fighting this battle? I'm not sure I was properly trained and I have no Jedi Master or Sensei to prepare me for what's to come. When will I know the tide has turned, either way?

I supposed a highly skilled group of individuals will help me along this road. I'm sure they've seen hundreds ' maybe thousands ' faces, the visages of the young, middle aged and old, all scarred from battle. Hopefully they sent throngs of them home to enjoy a full life. But what of the others?

And, of course, my family and wife will be there supporting me.

But I can't help but wonder and worry.

Everyone is different, I'm reminded.

I looked at the full moon in the early evening sky recently and I pondered the cosmic forces that keep it in place. It's in the perfect spot.

What's keeping me from being in the right spot?

I'm finding it harder to make sense of it all. I know answers are elusive and perhaps that's the purpose of our journey here on earth ' to uncover new solutions and suffer through new experiences.

Money, car repair bills, even the taste of food; they all lack substance, meaning. I'm getting tired wrestling with my thoughts, and no tag-team partner waiting in the wings. Nothing seems important in the big picture, nothing but health.

Is that our purpose, to swallow those 'jagged little pills,' as Alanis put it? And back to my odd dream ' it was always me.' Does that mean I was always meant to travel this road, one that it was laid out expressly for me?

I suppose I will find out. After all, I will need several more chapters to complete this book of mine. The longer the better!

Here's to all the cancer sufferers out there, may your worry be lifted and your remaining years be filled with newfound joy and all

the colours of the rainbow.

I am reminded of the children's tale. There once was a little engine who thought he could do it. He did.

I?think I?can, too. I?have to.