

We have obligations in exchange for our blessings

by Mark Pavilons

We are blessed to be here, free to live our lives to the fullest.

Unfortunately, we often squander such a blessing, or 'change our tune' in our latter years. Wisdom will definitely improve one's perspective on things.

And so will our mortality, especially when faced with the cold, harsh realities and life-altering illnesses.

I haven't had an epiphany or remarkable awakening since my cancer diagnosis. I think I've always lived with respect for others, compassion and genuine honesty.

I've written about my life and all of its ups and downs, for decades, and I've been quite upfront and blunt about it.

I am preoccupied with my plight and that makes my daily routine and chores a bit tough at times (sorry for going on about it). I no longer have any patience for the mundane and refuse to engage in stupid debates.

One social media post offered some tips on 'creating a day worth living.'

One point was to 'express gratitude for what you have.'

Another suggested that we 'do something productive.'

I check my emails and do work-related things every day, including evenings and weekends, while working from home.

We should 'do something for someone else,' and I agree. My oldest daughter recently moved into her first home - a huge milestone and undertaking. My wife and I have been showering her with all the necessities and household items she needs for a great start.

My daughter, and our entire family, often rises to the challenge to help friends, families in need, and pitch in to causes in developing nations.

People often criticize our governments for not helping our own citizens first, before dishing out foreign aid. If you've seen how some of these people live you will understand their desperation.

The post also urges us to get some sunlight and put a smile on someone's face.

I have lived by both over the years. I love the warmer months and have made it a point to soak up the rays every summer, whether away or simply relaxing in the back yard.

Those who know me will agree that I try to entice smiles from those around me, with my wit and sense of humour. Smiles are everything - a gift that's unique to human beings. Facial expressions are priceless.

Another online post, shared by my wife, tells us to 'always give yourself something small.'

We should look forward to nice meals, it says.

I'm not sure why, but lately, I'm obsessed with food - chicken wings, steak, all-you-can-eat ribs, 'crabfest,' smash burgers, the list

goes on. And of course, given my internet searches, these images are popping up daily, giving me (pardon the pun) plenty of food for thought.

My wife and I enjoyed dinner out together recently and it was a great break from the at-home dinner chore. We not only enjoyed the food, but each other's company, and the blessings that come with that.

The post also prescribes a weekend stroll. Not a walk, but a jaunt, taking in our surroundings.

We had just that opportunity, when our daughter took us to one of the public beaches in Innisfil. While the beach and noise from the food trucks were distracting, we did find solace at the proverbial dock of the bay.

Together, we simply stared out at the lake, felt the breeze on our faces and just soaked up the calming forces of nature. Perfect. Therapeutic.

My Picean wife lives for the water and I know this provided her with some fuel for her tank.

Your mind and body need gentle reminders that life is meant to be enjoyed, not just a series of chores and survival, according to the post.

Indeed.

Here in hectic North America, we're busy as bees. Too busy.

We tend put work, errands and chores ahead of joy and fulfilment. A lot of it is out of necessity. Life is expensive lately. And many people really are in survival mode, when it comes to paying for rent, groceries, gas, etc. It's hard to remind ourselves to seek cheer when the kitchen table is littered with bills and statements.

Again, life is meant to be relished, savoured. We need to love ourselves, but we also need to extend that to others.

We are not alone on this planet, nor do we navigate our years on Earth without family, friends, acquaintances. There is so much strength in numbers that we ought to attract others to our inner circles and exchange positive energy.

It's okay to tell others, even acquaintances, that we love and respect them. I dish out hugs, even to my male friends, without hesitation. It's genuine. It shows I care.

Hugs are underrated ... for a moment everything feels so calm and safe like nothing can hurt you.

Further, I always give credit where it's due. I often extend thanks and tell everyone I encounter on a daily basis to have a good day. Good manners are worth their weight in gold, especially these days.

It acknowledges others, in more than just a rote, robot-like way. It lets others know they are seen, heard and valued. Isn't that part of the reason we're here to lift others up? A little goes a long way, let me tell you.

Even during my hospital visits and blood draws, I thank the techs who work tirelessly each and every day. I'm sure health care facilities, and cancer centres, see thousands upon thousands of patients each year. Are they just numbers? Sick and dying individuals? Or are they spouses, parents, best friends, hard workers, volunteers, artists and compassionate souls? I hope the physicians approach each patient with the humanity they deserve.

I don't really know the impact I've had during my life, other than directly upon those in my family. I hope I have made others smile and left a lasting impression. I wish to have contributed, and made things better in some small way. I hope to have brought some

sunshine into other people's lives.

Giving is important. And ?creating a day worth living??is vital, too. Join in!