

What is really valuable to you in this world?

by Mark Pavilons

I pondered the term 'value,' and came to some interesting conclusions.

Value - the amount of money something is worth, relative worth, utility, or importance - seems to be an arbitrary creation. Similarly, 'worth' - not only means monetary value, but the value of something measured by its qualities or by the esteem in which it's held. Merit and excellence are also examples of worth.

We created the free market economy in the west, based on supply and demand with little or no government control. One of the central principles of a free market is the concept of voluntary exchange - any transaction in which two parties freely trade goods or services.

In a free price system, prices are not set by any agency or institution. Instead, they are determined by trades that occur as a result of sellers' asking prices matching buyers' bid prices arising from subjective value judgement in a market economy.

But of course, somewhere along the line, things went a bit awry. Our willingness to pay record-high prices is being tested daily. Our ability to pay the asking price is strained, so much so that we're limited, and reconsidering the barter system.

One disadvantage of a free market economy is that some producers are driven exclusively by their profit motives. Now there's a revelation.

Our current predicament is partially our fault. Perhaps we have over-valued consumer and material goods. Maybe we just lost our way.

Ann Landers was bang on when she observed that 'too many people today know the price of everything and the value of nothing.'

Most of us are keenly aware of the high cost of groceries. I saw a Facebook feed where people were talking about \$1,000 steaks from Costco. I had to intervene, noting that's a month's worth of groceries for some families. Anyone who buys a \$1,000 piece of meat should give their head a shake.

Precious metals and precious gems have been given arbitrary value, based on their quality and rarity. But neither apply. There are 216,000 tonnes of gold in circulation and an estimated 64,000 tonnes still in the ground. There are thousands of millions of carats of diamonds in circulation and the diamond market is estimated to generate \$115 billion this year. And De Beers and ALROSA, tightly managing output, meaning they manipulate the supply and price.

Confucius said 'The scholar does not consider gold and jade to be precious treasures, but loyalty and good faith.'

The act remains, most things in life that have value and worth are free, intangible and fleeting.

They are emotional. The worth takes place in our brains and in our hearts.

Willie Stargell said there's nothing he values more than 'the closeness of friends and family, a smile as I pass someone on the street.'

Good on ya, Willie.

Many of us have a car and value its purpose as a tool to carry us to work, to medical appointments and help us run errands. Its value

as conveyance ? especially if you have children ? can be almost priceless.

But the actual cost of such a vehicle is subjective. Did I pay the right price for my car??It was the amount I was willing to pay.

I?have never owned a brand-new automobile so the whole dealership experience is foreign to me. The average price of a new car today is roughly \$65,000 (2025 stats). Is that worth it??My parents paid less than that for their first home.

And they come with the biggest repair bills in recent history. I?have come to loathe them for their maintenance costs. Worth? Not much in my opinion.

One our biggest purchases would have to be our homes.

With average home prices in the GTA hovering over the \$1-million mark, this is a very costly purchase.

Again, where's the value??The house today was likely purchased for half its current value two decades ago.

The average cost of building a custom home in Ontario in 2026 sits somewhere between \$340 and \$575 per square foot. For a 2,000-square-foot home, that's roughly \$915,000. Add the cost of the land, and you're well into the millions.

There are many factors here ? labour costs remain elevated heading into 2026, with skilled trades still in high demand throughout Simcoe County, the GTA, and Georgian Bay. Material prices have stabilized, but lumber, concrete, and mechanical components have not returned to pre-2020 levels.

Today, most of us are house rich, but cash poor. My daughter, who recently purchased her first home, found the process stressful. No one wants to be a slave to their home and related expenses, and yet here we are, willing players in this supply-and-demand game.

Let's all agree that both of these things have worth, but their value is subjective. Some of us would rather live in a treehouse, or off-the-grid cabin near a lake. If aliens landed near my Bolton home, I'd beg them to take me with them!

So, my friends, we all know what's really important, don't we?

Time. It's the most important, intangible, fluctuating thing we have. Every second counts and what we do in our lives is supremely important. We just don't know how much time we have.

Health. Our bodies are our temples and maintaining these complex organisms isn't easy.?Genetics and DNA play a huge role and insidious diseases take many of us far too young. The value of health ? immeasurable!

We create human beings and become parents. The process is a miracle and bringing a child into the world equally impressive. What is the value of a human life??Priceless, at least here in the west.

What's a hug from your child worth??How do you put a value on your spouse's laugh??Just what would you ?pay??for love?

I?would urge everyone to shed the materialistic ropes that bind us, strangle us with perceived worth.

We have no need for silver and gold, for they do not define us. Generosity, a sense of humour, compassion, duty, loyalty and honesty do.

Each one of us is a treasured invaluable creation.

Keep that close to your heart, and not the 14kt necklace you're wearing.