

# Parenting duties grow exponentially

Mark Pavilons



Parenting, I find, is like trying to lasso a shooting star!

I had a minor epiphany recently when I picked up my son from school.

It wasn't like the elation you feel when your toast lands butter side up. No, this was much deeper than that.

I picked out my son from a long distance away, recognizing his stature, almost like finding Waldo in a sea of people. As he walked toward me, I had this feeling, a realization, that I had helped raise this fine young man. I could feel my dad smiling from above, subtly commenting on a job fairly well done.

Now what?

Parenting is a life-long endeavour. No one told me that child-raising actually gets exponentially challenging as time goes on.

I thought the hard part was over when the diapers came off and these little creations could walk, talk and dress themselves.

Alas, the tasks become different, but the parental pressures remain.

My oldest, Lexie, has finished her first year at Western. I had thought that nudging them out the door was a major step, and I wouldn't have to worry much about them after that.

Wrong.

If anything, the first few months away at university were tense, worrisome and uneasy, not for Lexie but for Kim and I! Every sniffle, sore throat and lack of food sent Kim scurrying to do damage control. Moms have a unique instinct and ability to rise to any challenge and care for their young, no matter what! I wish that males had a smidgen of this inherent skill or magical potion to give them a similar strength.

Lexie is an interesting creation. While Kim and I had something to do with her initial upbringing, she's morphed into this in-tune, connected and unbelievably compassionate soul, well beyond her 19 years.

Instead of taking the summer off to chill, she's working as many hours as she can to save up for yet another humanitarian trip to volunteer. This time, she had her sights set on Peru, but flight scheduling and finances derailed those plans.

Lexie also took it upon herself to volunteer with Knights Table, a facility in Brampton. She makes the trek every Tuesday (borrowing dad's car of course).

For over 26 years Knights Table has served the needs of people dealing with issues of poverty and homelessness in Peel Region. Knights Table is supported by a staff of 9 along with over 3,200 volunteers who are committed to assisting people who come through their doors.

The staff and volunteers assist the clients regardless of colour, culture, religion, economic status, gender, sexual orientation or social condition. They serve over 74,000 meals annually.

Lexie doesn't have to be there. She's not earning community hours or credit of any kind. She's there because she cares. And she loves people.

Despite her altruism, Lexie is responsible for giving us those noticeable grey hairs.

Peru, really? Her new choice is Iceland! She would sleep in a tent if she had to (actually she has). She follows the need, wherever it takes her!

My daughter has visited more places around the globe in the past 5 years than Kim and I have in our entire lives!

All the power to her. We encouraged her to travel while she could, and she just had to listen to us!

I didn't take my first trip away with Kim until I was 25 and we headed off to Freeport on her March break. That seems like a lifetime ago!

I totally understand Lexie's penchant for getting a feel of the local culture. Every time Kim and I travelled, we loved meeting local people and talking with them, not as tourists, but as visitors who wanted to learn more.

Lexie found her encounter with the indigenous Maasai people in Kenya quite fascinating. I can totally see her wearing the traditional red robes and engaging in a spear-throwing competition!

Given the hectic pace of our stress-filled lives here in Canada, I can see myself donning the warrior garb and venturing out into the wilderness to hunt wild boar, sing, dance and celebrate life with my newfound brethren.

There are no rituals in my 16-year-old son's future. Liam is just emerging into young adulthood. He's taking a summer school class to improve his grades, so he can excel in Grade 11 and reach his goal in the field of astronomy and space exploration. My son, the astronaut! Wouldn't that be something?

Our youngest, who'll soon be the wise age of 12, wants to be a veterinarian.

Given what our recent emergency vet bill cost, I'm totally behind this decision!

Our society and its inhabitants are a lot different than they were when I was in college, or emerging as a young graduate.

My chosen profession has morphed, too, but so far, so good.

I will help my young ones as much as I can, for as long as I am able.

I'm happy to pick my kids out of a crowd, not so much for their accomplishments, but for who they are. If they change the world, well that's just great for all of us!