

Actually, we parents did sign up for all of this!

Mark Pavilons



Most of us parents ?never signed up for this.?

In fact, no one asked us to sign anything.

And yet, we're bound, legally, morally, emotionally and mentally, to our offspring and our never-ending responsibilities on the home front.

There's nothing good, or old-fashioned, about child-rearing in this day and age. It's a web of stickly complexities, compounded by growth hormones in our food and instant access to the world's knowledge.

I often feel like I'm caught in a giant Slinky and the more I?struggle to escape, the more entangled I become.

Alas, this is, in fact, what I signed up for.

As Baby Boomers, we should have recognized the break-neck speed as which society changed over the past three decades. We should have realized that all previous bets were off, and we had to totally redesign the handbook on life and parenting. Like technology, parenting advice becomes obsolete before it even catches on!

My parents never gave me much in the way of advice. My dad passed away when Lexie, our first-born, was just six months old. My mom died when our last born was only six.

My mom offered plenty of tidbits and observations and despite being ?old school,??was often subtle about it. She understood modern family dynamics and realized that often ?resistance was futile.?

In the end, she was quite impressed with the offspring we molded, but it would have been nice to have her around today. As much as things have changed, there are times when I would love to hear some outdated advice from my mom and dad. Heck, I'd just like them to see my kids, almost all grown up and everything.

Perhaps they can, from their Heavenly perch.

Some people turn to God, and ask for the ?serenity??to accept things we can't change, and for the ?courage??to change stuff we can. And of course, the ?wisdom??to know the difference. There's a lot to this prayer.

Whenever I?hear the word ?serenity,??I always think of the 1997 Seinfeld episode where Frank Costanza utters the phrase ?serenity now??to keep his blood pressure in check.

I'm all for courage, and of course, wisdom. Both come with age, and a certain amount of risk-taking and life experiences. We learn by doing, and we grow by making mistakes and using our noggins to figure things out.

In helping my kids with their homework, I?would rank ?patience??at the top of the parenting list. I?believe patience is adversely affected by ground-level ozone, Aspartame and rock music from the 1980s!

I am struggling with elementary and high school math and I doubt I would pass either course today! And yet, I toil on with my youngsters. I?have found a new respect for good teachers ??it's quite an art to impart knowledge, and better, create a spark for understanding complexities.

My son Liam is finding it a bit tough. He's worried that several of his career choices all involve math and science and he won't be

able to rise to the challenge. We found a very good tutor, but it's hard to ease his inner turmoil. Many educators criticize current school methods for teaching math, and others are working on easy-to-follow apps in hopes that kids will embrace math again. Who among us, would want to be a teenager today, trying to decide on a decent career and deal with current economic conditions? My dad wanted me to pursue a career in computer programming because he felt that was the way of the future. While he was right, the very thought upset my stomach. My strengths were always in languages, writing and people.

I don't know how to help my son reach for the stars, discover new comets, or send new probes into outer space. I can surely share his interest and love of the cosmos.

I can guide him, encourage him and help fund his post-secondary education. The rest is up to him.

Generally, youngsters don't have a great deal of patience, serenity or wisdom.

Maybe these things should be included in every university course!

I envy those who've reached the pinnacle of success, and can give their kids everything, or leave them a legacy in the form of a family business.

In King, there are ample opportunities to encounter very successful entrepreneurs. A recent visit to Kingscross also revealed the lifestyle of the rich and famous and stirred a tiny bit of envy.

We all strive to be successful in our own created mini-worlds.

It's not always simple to accurately measure success.

Parents don't get a lot of praise or reward for this full-time job. But the reward is in those smiling faces, warm hugs and hearty belly laughs! More often, the reward is also in those broccoli-induced frowns, math-generated pencil-throwing and hormone-sparked mood swings. We burst with joy when we see our kids leave the house wearing two different socks. And we swell with pride when our young adults let loose with award-winning burps at the dinner table!

Late-night phone calls from university, money transfers, and refereeing school yard disagreements are all part of the job of a parent. The pep talks and ego-booster are constant, and often exhausting.

Serenity now!