

## Letting your inner self shine through

**Mark Pavilons**

?It's amazing ... the love inside, you take it with you.  
Sem, from the movie Ghost

In this classic movie, Patrick Swayze learned that death isn't the greatest loss. Love continues.  
The biggest loss is what dies inside us while we live.

For those of us who've experienced the potholes in life, we've come to realize a few things. The old cliché about what's inside that matters, is true. Real beauty comes from inside and joy is one of the mo



st powerful substances on the planet.

Joy, happiness and a sense of peace don't come from looking in the mirror.

We have all endured pain and suffering. I?need my pain; it has helped shape who I've become. My pain, coupled with the extreme love I?have inside, are the ingredients of this strange concoction known as Mark. Of course, there are some other things in this mixture, like DNA, environmental influences and maybe even eye of newt.?But it's all good, and it's all necessary. Remove a single substance, and we're no longer the same.

We scatter-brained westerners are so busy dealing with minutiae that we often neglect ourselves. Moms and dads know this all too well. My wife and I are often in the kitchen until 10 p.m., making lunches and doing the dishes, after all the other umpteen chores, errands and tasks have been dealt with.

There are times when I feel like I've lost myself, or at least I've gone missing. We have so many responsibilities, priorities and menial tasks to tend to that we become almost robot-like in our actions.

We may take time for ourselves at the end of the day, to chill and decompress from the day's stressors. But during this down time, do we meditate or look deep into our souls?

No, that would take too much time!

In order to fully recharge, we need to disconnect totally from the world. We feed our bodies every day and we need to feed our minds, souls and inner selves.

My oldest daughter enjoys yoga. My other two like to be distracted by movies, but they do grasp some of the important messages in life. I?enjoy online ?window shopping??and a couple of apps on my smart devices. My wife doesn't have much in the way of hobbies, but does like a good laugh and sitcom.

It wasn't too long ago that our species spent time together as a family and shared stories. We talked, discussed things and laughed together. Before TV, the Internet and even electricity, we literally sat by the fire and read books.

Even going back a mere 40 years, life was much simpler. Sure, we had big hair, big shoes and wide pant legs, but we didn't stress over the threat of nuclear war, RRSPs or legalized marijuana.

We had faith in our government, our law enforcement professionals and our teachers. We spent most of our time outside, running around, until we could run no more.

Fast-forward and there's a void, a piece missing. I can't recall when exactly that something died inside, but I know it has.?It likely

slipped away quietly in the middle of the night.

In my teens and early 20s, I was optimistic, relatively happy, positive, funny and curious. I was up for anything.

When I met my wife, I became quite the romantic, something she wishes would surface again.

We work so hard at working out problems, we forget about working on ourselves.

I tend to smile and laugh a lot. It's my way of coping. I've been told that my smile is like an old friend, somewhat reassuring. There are so many reasons to smile during the course of the day, I wonder why more people aren't doing it! You must admit, human beings are hilarious.

At work, I can solve almost any problem, often within the hour. At home, it's a different matter. In all of my post-secondary education and hands-on experience, I never learned about keeping the spark alive, or having patience with a child who's struggling with math. I seldom had to deal with who I am.

What I do know is that I have a lot of love inside; I'm compassionate and genuine. I'm witty, sarcastic and efficient. I'm a pretty good communicator.

Do all of these qualities define who I am? Or do they complement the interesting critter inside?

We are all different, and yet, we're all the same.

Until scientists perfect cloning, we are unique creatures, you and I. "There is no one alive Youer than You," noted Dr. Seuss.

Joel Osteen challenges us to get out of our comfort zones. "God has put gifts and talents in you that you probably don't know anything about."

What lies behind you and in front of you, pales in comparison to what lies inside, said Ralph Waldo Emerson.

What if we opened the door and really looked inside of ourselves?

"You find sometimes that a thing which seemed very thingish inside you is quite different when it gets out into the open and has other people looking at it," remarked Winnie-the-Pooh, who was much wiser than people give him credit for.

When I think of my wife and kids, I think of their really cool characteristics. They are deep thinkers but they can be opinionated. They are caring to a fault. Maybe we all care too much. I think it's called love.

I think we need to disconnect and then reconnect with ourselves and our loved ones.