

## Humans are meant to 'break' a little from time to time

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'You look somewhat like a mouse,' George Little said. 'That's because I am a mouse,' responded Stuart in the classic film.

'You look somewhat broken,' said a concerned stranger. 'How astute of you, I am somewhat broken,' was my response.

How many of us feel broken in some way? We were part of the privileged generation, Baby Boomers who were fortunate to have had a good start in life. Aside from typical teen angst and various growing pains, we were lucky. Sure, we fell victim to minor bullying, acne, and struggled with our relationships. Not much has changed.

The current batch of Millennials enjoy even higher standards.

My mom, who quite literally escaped over the wall after the war, was somewhat broken. She didn't start out that way and was a very decent, compassionate person. She lost her mother from a ruptured appendix, something that is typically handled well today. During the war, doctors were in short supply, as was speedy response by local paramedics.

Her dad was in charge of the local municipal public works and as such suffered interrogation by the occupying Russian officials.

They apparently beat him so severely he died a few days later at home of a heart attack.

He was broken.

My dad also suffered during the war, losing a few friends. Invading Russian soldiers in all three Baltic countries forced many to flee, leaving everything they knew behind. That broke him, too.

He only returned to his homeland of Latvia after the Berlin Wall fell, and communism retreated from the Baltics. His trip was bitter-sweet. The country, he told us, had been stuck in time.

Today, Latvia is a beautiful place, but like most former Russian-occupied countries, had to work extra hard to return to 'normal.'

My late sister suffered kidney failure, went through dialysis, got a divorce, went blind, got a kidney transplant, got well, got sicker ?

She was broken in so many ways.

Okay so I had bad skin, forcing me to become a bit of a class clown, compensating with humour. I didn't have as many dates as others, but I excelled academically. I had a small group of close friends, but after high school, we went our separate ways, and I've since lost touch with them all.

I wasn't so much broken as slightly sprained, but the scars I bear are more than physical.

My son got bummed recently when he wasn't accepted to his college course of choice. He wondered why he wasn't chosen, even though I explained it was a highly competitive course with only a few spots available. He has a passion for writing song lyrics and performing that, for now, will have to wait. He broke a little when I delivered the bad news last week.

I?broke a little, too.

My wife is a TA with the Peel District School Board and this year's job placement was hurried and unorganized, for a number of reasons. Despite having several interviews and likely making it to the top of principals' lists, she was tossed into the great pool, where a decision was made for her. She will now have to go to a new school, picked by board staff.

While our teachers are a privileged bunch, the support staff, and all the hard-working TAs and ECEs, are not as lucky.

Kim felt a little broken last week, too.

And a bit more of me cracked, like that antique China teacup in the curio.

My oldest daughter Lexie is nearing the end of her 5-week humanitarian volunteer experience in Rwanda. Her assignment is teaching English and life skills to women and children. She fell in love with her group and vice versa. Is she bummed by the inequalities and lack of access to education for women and children in developing countries? You bet.

She has shed more than a few tears during her time there, especially when visiting the memorial for the genocide.

She feels deeply. And she broke a bit. Yet she texted me that she never wants to leave!

It seems we all 'break' a little bit when faced with dilemmas, tragedies, bad luck, disappointment, heart-aches and missed opportunities.

Fortunately we're resilient creatures. Like a Greek wedding, we have many plates available to smash. The custom, however, likely dates back to the ancient practice of ritually 'killing' plates on mourning occasions, as a means of dealing with loss.

Like most parents, it pains me to see my loved ones in any sort of distress. My teenage son gets down quite easily and we try hard to lift him up.

My wife and I are the cheerleaders, the advocates, the guidance counsellors and employment advisors. We are the intact albeit

somewhat chipped plates that sit proudly on the rack.

It's easy for me to fall into a depressive funk. Despite my meds, I'm often blindsided by stress and anguish. Like many things, we push through the tough times and often put our feelings on the back-burner. But these things have a way of creeping up on us and biting us in the backside.

I have felt myself slipping time and again, almost to the point of tears. But tears don't pay the rent and there's nothing to be gained by curling up into a ball under the covers.

We clever humans can also be the adhesive, the super glue that binds and mends. When we call upon our powers, we can fill in those cracks and weld together those breaks.

We don't have to go it alone. There is strength in numbers.

In order to mend and become stronger, perhaps it's necessary to endure a few breaks along the way.

