

## Finding yourself during difficult times

### MARK PAVILONS

It's not always easy to stay in touch with the person who means the most ? yourself! Sure, we live with ourselves 24/7 and don't always find this living arrangement the best at times. We argue, but we mostly agree with ourselves and feel smug about it. Boy, if only we could tap into those conversations inside our own heads, and play it back like a video for our friends and loved ones. On second thought, that may be a very bad idea. There are times when we need to kick ourselves in the butt and get motivated, engaged and active, especially during this forced down time. Despite the current challenges, we all have to remain positive and optimistic. To do otherwise would be detrimental to our own mental health. While people of all ages around the globe scramble to find some sort of sanity and normalcy in a world gone mad, we don't always recognize those who are least able to deal with it ? our youth. My 14-year-old daughter has gone nuts in isolation. She misses her friends and while they stay up until all hours of the morning talking and FaceTiming, it's not the same. I long for the noise that teenagers make ??even the silly ones ??and I hope for the return of laughter as Kyleigh and her friends reunite. Fortunately, she's cracking the books thanks to online learning strategies put in place by the ministry and local school boards. I hope this keeps her interested and motivated to keep learning. We're there every step of the way to ensure her success. Cracking the books, or in this case exploring the web, can only get those neurons firing again. Our eldest graduates university very soon and she just arrived back home from London. Of course, outings with her friends and boyfriend are a bit curtailed, but we will have to make the best of it. She's also unsure of a return date for her part-time summer job. It's a cautious new world to be sure. This was supposed to be her summer of escape, exploration, self-pampering and reaching out, after her four years of hard work at Western. It may very well become the summer of boredom and self-reflection. But there's plenty of chores around the house! My 19-year-old son has an overabundance of teen angst. He's been accepted at Seneca for this September, but at this point, that remains uncertain. He has a part-time job but is a bit weary of continuing at this time, until we see a flattening of the curve of COVID-19. The other day he wanted to give himself a crew cut, military fashion. I always threatened to send him to military school, but a buzz cut? We offered what we could in terms of advice, but he's an adult. He did back off after some thought. My wife got out the electric clippers and went to work on a suitable style. He said something very interesting, something we should all keep in mind. He said what makes sense to him may not make sense to us or anyone else. His approach, his logic and even his specific journey, are all his own. He nailed it. I thought about it and had to agree. Who's to say what path is right or wrong?? Who's an expert in life? Am I the definitive voice on how young adults should live their lives? Nope. He's a smart young man but he's easily derailed and frustrated. These times have not helped one iota. Sure, we would all love a clear, definitive path, one that takes us effortlessly from point A to point Z with never a bump or detour in the road. That's not realistic. And think of what you'd miss while you're travelling along the scenic route.? Heck, I've even driven off the road entirely on occasion. Aside from being tossed off our regular routines, I think the uncertainty has some of us on edge. Sure, we will get over the hump, and things will return to normal in the coming months. Just what this new normal looks like has yet to be revealed. It will be very different, to say the least. But perhaps we can get back to life being ?predictable,? or at least somewhat certain. That may seem a bit boring considering what we're going through, but it's comforting. We have older children in our household so they at least understand this new ordeal. I can't help but wonder how younger children are getting through. Even their parents can't offer much in terms of an explanation, outlook or answers. Even the steadfast ?everything will be okay? line may not hold true. I am a big supporter of shopping local and I'm a huge fan of supporting Canadians. It pains me to know that some businesses will never recover and some people will never get their jobs back. I'm sad that I won't see the Raptors take another title this year. Like many Canadians, I've taken our stable and strong economy and political system for granted. Now that all bets are off, I don't know what to expect. Even though I've lived through, and reported on, several recessions, crises and shutdowns, we're in unprecedented territory here. I am somewhat reassured by daily reports from top officials and politicians, that the movers and shakers are doing their utmost to serve and protect us all. I would love to see regular live press conferences from our leaders continue, long after COVID-19 is a memory. I think as citizens, taxpayers and humans, we want reassurances. We want someone to have our backs. I get it that at this point, no one can offer any promises. What I do know that as soon as the green light is given for family gatherings, on goes the grass skirt and up go the tiki torches! And then some family group hugs! Keep the emotional support networks going, folks!

