

## Time to 'infect' people with a little bit of hope

### Mark Pavilons

There's a quaint prayer that asks the Good Lord to give us enough strength to make changes and accept the things we can't change. While there's no mention of 'hope,' it's pretty much inferred. We should all strive, especially now and into our new, uncertain future, to take more out of life than it takes out of us. JFK once told us we shouldn't let our fears hold us back from pursuing our hopes. And Dale Carnegie espoused: "Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all." Human beings are a funny breed. Not the Adam Sandler funny, but rather odd, strange and peculiar. We are quite brilliant at times, capable of much good. In fact, during an ad-hoc, dad-run mini family meeting last week I told my offspring they're quite intelligent critters. With their combined brain power, there's nothing they can't do or overcome. Despite the ample helpings of gray matter, we are also susceptible to physical and emotional setbacks, which affect our ability to change the world. Boredom, and confinement, can wreak havoc on our souls. My wife said she encountered a man at a store last week. Estimated to be in his 40s, he said he was so bored being stuck at home he decided to pick up smoking! In the past month or so, we've all been suffering, inwardly and outwardly. A recent Nanos poll revealed that people reported feeling stressed regularly or all the time has more than doubled since the onset of COVID-19. Fears over physical well-being and personal finances were cited as the primary reasons. They are also aware of a decline in their mental health, with nearly 40 per cent reporting that their mental health is worse or somewhat worse than before the outbreak. I feel for those who've lost their jobs and those small business owners who aren't sure whether their doors will ever reopen. Making a living today is hard enough, without this tsunami of grief. But hasn't God bestowed countless blessings and qualities upon us? Unfortunately super strength were not among His gifts. In the absence of perfection, we mammals call upon some rather unscientific methods to deal with life. We rely on our instincts; follow our hearts; muster up faith, and always have hope. For many across the globe, hope is all they have. And that's another fact I try to bestow upon my children. They are not struggling to survive and they rise and shine from comfy beds to meet the world head-on and experience new challenges each and every day. Two of them have been to countries, and met people, who struggle to survive and make it to the end of the day. For them, and us, hope can be as powerful as a hot meal, green tea, vitamins, antibiotics or vaccines. Hope comes from many sources, especially from within. We can summon it up during times of emotional turmoil. If we look for it, we can usually find it but we may to give it a good shake, dust it off and plump it up a bit. When I hear my kids laugh so loud the walls shake, I frown, then smile. Their joy and humour is so intense they just can't keep it bottled up. Powerful stuff that is. Just ask Mike and Sully. And that gives me hope. They are the future, after all. Three these will make the world a better place in their own way. I believe we all do and it's our job to pass this duty on to others. Our society, current dilemma aside, has been struggling with major issues for decades - climate change, world hunger, world peace, world food supply. The current pandemic has actually eased tensions a bit, but I doubt we'll see world peace when we're on the other side of COVID-19. But I remain hopeful. Hope, faith and prayer won't solve our problems. But those very human concepts will go a long way to altering the fabric of our lives. Armed with such intangibles, we peculiar humans often rise to the occasion. We emotional creatures have proven to be loving and compassionate to a fault. And we average working stiffs have shown great courage and compassion to our friends and neighbours in times of need. We don't readily recognize hope or mention it to others. It's like a secret we keep under our vests. But it can be the fuel in our tanks, the immeasurable substance that boosts our immune systems and serotonin levels. The beauty of hope is it's easily shared with others. We can actually give it to someone else, through our thoughts, prayers and course, actions. We can also spread the word on social media, through clever quotes, passages or memes. Once more of us begin to realize the power of this commodity, the more it will burn like a fuse and spread uncontrollably. That's what we need right now, as we approach the light at the end of the tunnel. That's what we need to re-ignite the economy, society, our community, province and country. Imagine, busting loose when this pandemic subsides. I picture throngs of citizens gathering in church, parks, beaches, at grocery stores, sharing a renewed optimism. Reflecting on the hole we're climbing out of, wouldn't it be nice to 'infect' society with a newfound sense of hope?

