

Earning one's place in this world



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The world is a busy and crowded place. With a population of roughly 7.8 billion, just how do we stand out? A line from an Amazon Prime show made me think: "What have you done today to earn your place in this crowded world?" While the show is a portrayal of humankind's dark side, it poses an interesting question. Just what do we do, on a daily basis, to "earn" our place, to stand out, to make a difference? Do we even have to? Well, if everyone began each morning with this very thought, think about how our world could evolve and develop. Brene Brown once said that perfectionism is about "earning approval and acceptance." But all of this is much easier said than done. Unfortunately, many of us are defined by our work and this slots us into a particular place in the world. We nurture our children and give them all they need. With a gentle pat on the bum, we send them on their way to school. With a hug, we congratulate them on graduating high school. With ear-to-ear grins, and decreased bank accounts, we are thrilled when they graduate college or university. We hope they find their "place in the world." After years of post-secondary studies, they definitely "earn" a shot at it. This can be a life-long search, however. Some of us never find our place, while others know right away what their future holds. This is on an individual level, expanding to our close-knit circle of friends and family. But about the bigger picture? Does our education system encourage us to learn, rise above the rest and help us to grow and be innovative, so we can improve our nation's place in the world? Canadians have a reserved sense of national pride, but make no mistake, we are a proud bunch. Just where does this pride stem? Is it that, as a nation, we are peacekeepers, humanitarians, passionate environmentalists and welcoming hosts? Is it because we're tolerant and immensely appreciative of our cultural mosaic? All of these things don't just happen - they require constant effort on everyone's part. They require goals, objectives, directives, strategies and human beings to carry out. We place our faith in our elected officials - from the mayor at the helm of our local municipality, all the way to the prime minister - to do all they can to ensure we have one of the best places in the world in which to live, work and play. Conversely, they rely on us to do the same. Our system isn't optimal unless we, the people, also do our part. We become engaged, speak our minds, help bring about change. We lobby, delegate and hit the ground running. We care. We are not all physicians, research scientists or senators. Most of us don't have the power to send ripples through the international ponds. But what if each one of us practices a new way of looking at our place in the world? What if we all gave a damn and acted on our feelings? What if we earned our place? Again, we don't have to start letter-writing campaigns or organize protests. We don't necessarily need gofundme web pages. All we have to do is take an interest, work hard, help make someone else's life a bit better. And that could mean being better employees, parents, taxpayers, motorists and consumers. It could mean being a more caring teacher, mentor or youth leader. We humans, and our governments, tend to be reactionary. We are seldom prepared for the worst - current situation is a case in point. However, the pace and degree at which we react, mitigate and change are vital as well. Being resilient, compliant and helpful all work together in encouraging a positive outcome. What have you done today to earn your place in this crowded world? This could have far-reaching implications. Consider a dystopian future, where human beings are valued on their contributions and perceived "worth." We would have to work hard to prove we are indeed valuable to the cause of the day. Otherwise, our fate could be in jeopardy. We'd be cast out into the radioactive wasteland or shipped off to a remote island in the South Pacific. On a much higher level, what if we'd have to answer that question at the Pearly Gates, to God Himself? Yes, he would already know, but in case he misplaced his ledger, we'd have to rhyme off a litany of good deeds, accomplishments, achievements, and compassionate actions. We'd have to prove our

worth. I say it's a good idea to be prepared. Better safe than sorry! So, my fellow human beings, what are we to do? Well, we need to encourage good behaviour, reward it in fact. And we need to curb bad behaviour. Most parents teach their young these very fundamental tidbits early in life. They pick them up, but once they become teenagers and young adults, they regress. It's a constant real life instructional video, playing out daily in the homes of millions. I tossed out the aforementioned question to them recently, and I received some pretty perplexed looks, along with some interesting expletives. A defensive crew I have. Maybe everyone should stick this sentiment on their computers, car visors, refrigerators and bathroom mirrors. Let's give it some serious thought day in, and day out. And let's see where it takes us!