

Have we become poor, bored and lazy?

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There's no question the face of our society ??both inward and outward ? has changed. These changes have been decades in the making, and some may have been fueled by the pandemic. But the bottom line is our privileged society, and all of its members, have become a bit apathetic, entitled and complacent. I was struck by a comment made in a Netflix movie, where an Africa refugee new to England called the European hosts ?poor, bored and lazy.? I thought about it for a long time, letting the brain worms twist and turn. How right she was. I'm a 50-something white male, from decent, hard-working European stock. My parents arrived here after the war, starting over in this brave new world. They arrived with little more than hope and optimism, believing this was a place to breathe deeply again, shed hatred, war and desperation. Despite the emotional burdens they carried, they believed they could carve out something from nothing. They started over. Hard work? No problem they were used to it. Inner strength and perseverance? They had it in spades. Physical and emotional scars? Sure, who didn't? PTSD? Likely more than they let on. Demons? A few. Just how did they go from post-war immigrants to established, middle class Canadians? Unfortunately I can't ask them, or reminisce. I can no longer listen to tales long into the wee hours. Many stories, perhaps the more difficult and tragic ones, were never shared or fully discussed. I remember curled up in the back seat of my dad's Oldsmobile, on the way home from a get-together. My mom had a bit too much to drink, and my parents fought over something trivial. She blurted out a secret that she kept from her kids. It was an incident in Germany before she snuck over the wall. I pretended to be asleep. I wish I had been. The unspeakable truth made me shake and cry. I had no idea what to do with this information. I still don't. Hardships and tragedy? More than they deserved. And for me? A decent upbringing filled with love, care and plenty of moral fibre. We weren't rich but we had it good. No complaints from yours truly. I?always felt lucky. Also no turmoil, or real struggles. No starting over. How easy I had it. And how easy our kids have it today. There's no question I was a bit spoiled, and I didn't have to deal with war-related PTSD. I'm not saying you have to experience tragedy and misfortune and begin a new life to really get it. But it does put things in perspective. Poor, bored and lazy? Perhaps. Poor in terms of not really getting it; not knowing what's valuable. We have yet to fully put materialism and a tiny bit of wealth in real perspective. We still want and we spend frivolously. We waste. Bored? At times. Why? Because our purpose is foggy, and our path unclear. Our parents were never bored. They couldn't afford to be. Laziness was the enemy. As a youngster, I was never either. The long summer days in rural Caledon were great. Nothing spectacular, but they didn't have to be. Sunshine, long, waving grass, a few dandelions to blow around. A child doesn't need much else. I had chores, responsibilities and respect for my parents. Work before play, okay sometimes play instead of work. We had four acres north of Bolton, so in order for me to do those chores, my parents had to find me first! Today, boredom is the curse of tweens, teens and yes, many adults. Don't get me wrong our kids are quite bright. But self-motivated, independent go-getters? Not so much. I have to admit, even pre-COVID I was a bit lazy, not in terms of work, finances or family responsibilities. But I was definitely a bit lacking in the get-up-and-go department. My umph lacked umph. Perhaps it was the stormclouds that have permeated much of 2020. Maybe, at this point in my life, I feel my best years are behind me and my future accomplishments may be few. When did work, debt, paying bills and juggling car repairs, insurance and home renovations become so tedious, tiresome and burdensome? When did we let the daily crap suck the joy out of us? We must always be on guard, ready and willing to take on the next challenge. We must always be nimble and ready to charge. When we become lazy, it can infiltrate our family relationships. These, most of all, require hard work, elbow grease, and a strong work ethic. Sound familiar? Maybe my parents were archaic, old-fashioned and backwards. But were they? They knew the secret all along because it came naturally. They didn't need self-help videos. They didn't talk about it or brag about it ??they just did what was necessary. They took their lumps but never revealed finances or bills or troubles to their kids. They were tough as nails. We can all learn from this attitude. We're softies to be sure. Paul Simon asked: ?Why am I so soft in the middle when the rest of my life is so hard?? Okay, we've all had to pay our dues, attend a few classes at the school of hard knocks, and get kicked around a bit here and there. But it pales in comparison to what our distant relatives did in paving the way for us to enjoy what we have today. How many 17-year-olds today would jump at the chance to serve their country?? How many pre-teens would work in the fields after school to help out at home? How many of our youngsters even say ?sir? or ma'am?? Poor, bored and lazy. Let's put our heads together and turn this around, shall we?

