

## Aging is part of the journey to what's next

**MARK PAVILONS**

"I think we all want to successfully push back the aging process, to deny the aging process. Who among us says, "Yippee, I'm getting older?"?" Jens Voigt

I have a few body parts that aren't too pleased with me. At least that's how my family doctor put it to me recently. A nice way of saying I have some age-related failings. I recently developed pain in my neck, shoulder and upper arm. Since I am not a professional baseball pitcher and no longer use a jackhammer, I'm not sure where my unkind soreness originated. My MD said some are old stresses, with related calcium deposits. And there's a bit of arthritis creeping in. Arthritis? Isn't that what seniors get? OMG. Dashing to and fro, and infrequently glancing in the mirror, I had considered myself a dashing 40-something. In reality, I overstayed my welcome in that age bracket long ago. Inside this happy-go-lucky comedic body is, alas, an aging machine. Even though it was made perfectly, as all human babies are, that was a while ago. Heck, the year I was created, things like microwaves and even push-button phones did not exist! Oh, woe is me! While galavanting around the cosmos is for the young, I really hope I haven't outlived my usefulness. I gave up my dream of being a Chippendale dancer many moons ago, long before I ever heard of Spanx. Even with some modern, form-fitting bodywear, I'd still look like Mr. Potato Head after being stretched in a medieval rack. But maybe I can trick my body, and defy nature. Perhaps I can cheat the aging process with copious amounts of magnesium, milk thistle and turmeric. I could even take a bath in epsom salts. It's funny, you know, this aging thing. When I look at my wife and I, I really believe the years have been kind to us. I don't feel much different than I did when we were married. Okay, my sprints are shorter and "Starsky and Hutching"? it over the hood of my Buick is now out of the question. But as we share the effects of gravity, it just gives us even more character. My laugh lines are even more pronounced, maybe because I continue to chuckle on a daily basis.

"Aging gracefully means being flexible, being open, allowing change, enjoying change and loving yourself." Wendy Whelan

I do spout off aloud in the comfort of my home that I'm getting too old for this or that. While my young, witty charges respond with snappy barbs, my wife says it's an excuse. Sure it is, but what excuses are left? As a responsible spouse, parent and homeowner, I simply can't say "I don't want to." And yet, that's how my middle child responds when I ask about certain chores. No one WANTS to, but often we HAVE to. It's just like aging. No one wants to deteriorate, slow down and suffer from a loss of our senses. Everyone in my household says I'm losing my hearing. So, the TV has to go up a notch and obviously everyone around me is mumbling! I could just twist my head around to the good side! Many "experts" will say that age is all in the mind, and there are many ways to stay fit and young at heart. That's true. But what's also a scientific fact is that many of our inner processes, hormones and various other chemicals, all change, slow down and work less efficiently. This all leads to a slow degeneration. All the walks in the forest and dark green veggies won't change that. Is it attitude, genetics, the environment or metaphysical influences that impact our aging process? Maybe all of the above. Of course, there is one option, albeit a bit out of reach at this point in time. Astronauts don't age at the same rate as we down here on terra firma. So my friends, the answer is for all of us to get shot into space! I'm in. While some view death as the "final adventure," I happen to think outer space is where it's at. But then again, we can always turn to our faith, and even the supernatural to give us some eternal hope. An interesting Netflix show on near-death experiences and other related phenomena, piqued my interest. One woman surgeon technically drowned, and was "dead" for roughly 30 minutes before being revived. Most medical practitioners say that's far too long to ever be revived successfully. She told her story of visiting a serene, euphoric plane of existence. Aside from the marvels of this apparent glimpse into the afterlife, she received word that her eldest son would not live past 19. She lived with that "knowledge" for a decade before it actually came to pass. Others profiled in the show reported leaving their bodies briefly and having a look around the operating room, watching the goings-on. Their accurate descriptions caught doctors by surprise. They all said there is simply no way the person could have seen or heard those events. Another episode featured channelling mediums. While some of this has to be taken with a grain of salt, almost every culture and religion on the planet believes in some form of afterlife, or life everlasting. The miracle of Christ's resurrection is something we're all familiar with. There are also thousands of near-death experiences on file, so it makes one stop and ponder. I've often believed that this existence on Earth can't be all there is. It's too self-centred, often too painful, to be all there is. Critics will say that religion and the belief in an afterlife are only coping mechanisms. But our universe, our understanding of existence, is still so new that I believe anything, and I mean anything, is

possible. So friends, enjoy the aging process. We'll all be joking about it on the other side!

