

No rush for kids to become adults

Mark Pavilons



?I think you should be a child for as long as you can. Don't rush into adulthood, it isn't all that much fun.?

Bob Newhart

Adulthood is somewhat overrated.

As we gently push our young toward the classrooms and their own independence, we should not deter them from enjoying childhood and all that it entails.

?My childhood was endless ? from eight to 18 felt like hundreds of years.?

Karl Lagerfeld

When I think of my childhood, some of the following words come to mind:

Freedom, unfettered, wind, tall grass, trees, playing, running, catching, scratches, late for dinner, bicycles, candy, skipping stones, summer vacation.

My childhood was relatively simple. We didn't really want for anything, and our needs were simple. Just let us loose during our free time and we'll find something to occupy our minds and bodies.

Note that TV, laptop, Facebook and video games were not on my list.

In our attempt to give our children a ?better childhood,? maybe we forgot some very important things along the way ? like the basics.

We work and spend our extra cash just so our kids can have the current style of backpacks, runners or jeans. We cave in to their ?need??to have the latest video game release.

But again, maybe we're wrong.

In my day, I'd never even ask my parents for expensive running shoes, a new bike or luxury item.

We made do. And we really didn't make a fuss about it. In my day, the ?Joneses??lived very far away, and there was no need to compete or show off to our friends. We made friends easily, had fights, threw stones and made up.

We seldom talked on the phone. When we wanted to do something we simply ventured outside to see who was out. Sometimes we did nothing, or just sat in a field enjoying the summer's breeze on our dirty faces.

Times were different and parents didn't have to worry if we were gone right after breakfast and didn't return home until the street lights came on.

I don't remember being ?forced??to grow up quickly. Sure, we assumed responsibilities around the house at a young age, but that

was normal. Like many, we were 'latchkey kids' long before the term was coined.

Our parents didn't seem overly protective, and knew that we had to learn life's lessons, no matter how hard. 'I told you so' was often deterrent enough in my day.

But that's not to say we didn't push the envelope and do some stupid things. But our form of stupidity revolved around jumping off the garage roof with an umbrella or bouncing on a tree branch to see how long it would take to break, dropping us 15 feet to the ground.

Our parents didn't grill us when we came home for dinner, or ask where the newest set of scrapes and bruises came from. These were physical evidence of some newly learned lessons.

While there were parts of adolescence I didn't much care for, I don't remember ever saying 'I can't wait to be an adult so I can ...'

As a teen, the biggest deal was getting a driver's licence and access to a car - anything with wheels was just fine.

Most often, we ate together as a family and heaven forbid if one of us was late for the table.

These days, it's often tough to assemble the troops for a sit-down dinner. We're reminded how vital this is to everyone's well being.

The benefits of eating together go beyond nutrition. Eating together is also linked to better language and literacy development as well as improved performance at school. Teens who spend time eating with their families are less likely to participate in 'bad' behaviour.

My wife is adamant that I get the clan together and ask them about their day's events. I know I'm in for some long-winded meandering tale from my youngest, but it's all good.

My son, the middle child, continues to test me with questions I simply can't answer. Plenty of good food for thought.

For the current crop of youngsters, growing up is going to be a bit problematic.

Setting aside money for university for three children aside, just what can they expect when they graduate in the next 5-15 years?

With house prices going the way they are, I don't know how my three offspring will ever be able to afford a home.

Wages aren't keeping pace, and the number of well paid jobs out there are shrinking.

It's estimated that in 100 years from now (my kids may make it), costs will rise 1,000% from today's levels.

I may be pessimistic, but I don't think wages will grow tenfold in that time period. That would mean someone earning 50K a year would be pulling in \$500,000 in 2113. Mind you, they'd have to, if houses skyrocketed to \$5 million (from \$500,000 today); cars shot up to \$300,000 for a mid-sized sedan and a loaf of bread was \$30. Our offspring would all be working well into their 80s!

It seems unfathomable.

Here are some growing up myths.

You can't really sleep until noon. Not if you have a job and want to keep it.

You can't really eat what you want. You'll soon learn fat has a mind of its own and travels to the least welcome spots!

Living on your own isn't what it's cracked up to be. You will find you'll return home often for things like laundry, company and money for rent, food and clothing.

And for parents, we won't be rid of them for a few more years.

But we can enjoy those years together! Put the brakes on the future, it will be here soon enough.