

## Regret the things you never tried

?There are no regrets in life, just lessons.?

??Jennifer Aniston

**Mark Pavilons**



The other day, my unusually wise 15-year-old daughter asked me whether I had any regrets.

It didn't take me long to answer her honestly.

I mentioned that a good friend of mine, back in high school, said we should only regret the things we didn't do, not the things we did. There's a lot of truth to that.

I then went on to tell my daughter that I simply regret some of the stupid things I did as a teen and young adult ? you know those college antics and minor indiscretions.

But on the whole, no. How can I regret falling love, getting married and having three really neat children? You can't put a price on that.

How can we regret all that we are?

Each and every day we make potentially life-altering decisions. We make fateful choices behind the wheel of our automobiles. We take our life in our hands crossing the street. We make good investments and bad. We spend when we should save. We say things that hurt others. We quit. Or we get back up again. We send that email that we've been itching to write for weeks.

We love, hate, accuse, forgive, sever and mend.

Boy, if you think about it, we have dozens of chances each day, perhaps on the hour, to really change the course of our lives.

And often, things just unfold as they're meant to. Some believe we are the pilots of our own ships of destiny, while others think there's a certain degree of cosmic or divine interference that governs our actions.

My daughter, while studying Canadian history, wanted to know the difference between freedom, free choice and free will. Ah, now there's some really good questions. My answer, though, was more philosophical than historical in nature.

By the very nature of our existence as humans, we are born with free will and free choice to think and act as we please. Of course, there are consequences to everything, and that's one of life's most important lessons that we learn at a very young age, and one that keeps evolving as we grow and mature.

Freedom is an entirely different matter, and that's where history comes in. In our country, we're very lucky to have enshrined fundamental human rights, freedoms and a political system that allows us to choose and be engaged. Many parts of the world, even in 2013, do not enjoy the things we take for granted.

And perhaps our free will and free choice is exactly where regrets are born. It's kind of an inherent catch-22 of being human, don't

you think? If you must look back, keep one foot on the gas!

Most of us would agree that pondering 'what could have been?' is largely irrelevant and a waste of our energy and talents.

Sure, we all have wish lists, bucket lists and endless to-do lists. We all have dreams.

And in creeps those nasty necessities of day-to-day living ? getting up in the morning, sending the kids off to school, putting gas in the car, going to work, paying bills, preparing dinner, doing dishes, taking out the trash ...

Unfortunately, our free choice in North American society comes with a multitude of mundane and trivial tasks. It's the price of being a member of society, owning a home and raising a family.

And then, one of the most important roles a person could have ? that of parent and guide ? is fraught with mistakes and regrets. We chose to become parents, with no previous training or direction, and we're free to carry on, again without training or guidance. Like a sight gag in a sit-com, often this does not end well.

But that's the beauty of being human ? making choices, even monumental ones, and making mistakes. That's how we learn, how we grow, how we mature and become wise.

So, for my daughter to ponder such things, before she's even had a chance to make any mistakes, is interesting, if not perplexing.

This one is a deep thinker and 'old soul'.

She also 'forced' her family members to engage in another interesting exercise. She asked us to write down five things (words, phrases) that best describe how we see ourselves. I mainly used things to describe my better qualities and sense of humour, along with one main negative self-esteem issue.

I'm not sure what she plans to do with this investigative, invasive exploration, but there must be a method to her 'madness'.

But back to regrets.

Should I have ventured to one of those big city daily newspapers or become a foreign correspondent? Should I have chosen computer programming and gotten into the video game industry when it was still forming? Should I have invested in real estate or gold bullion?

One can ask themselves similar questions for all eternity.

I would recommend that everyone rent or buy the movie *The Family Man*, starring Nicholas Cage and Tea Leoni. It illustrates my points perfectly.

My choices have not only led me to where I am today, but they are fully ingrained within my soul. They are part of me. All those thousands of people I've met during the course of my journalism career have made me a better and more compassionate person. My wife and my extended family has given me different perspectives. My children continue to test my limits and make me really see.

Regrets? Who needs them? I'm too busy finding new ways to make mistakes!

'The regrets of yesterday and the fear of tomorrow can kill you.'

Liza Minnelli