

How do we spend the years of our lives?

Mark Pavilons

If you can spend a perfectly useless afternoon in a perfectly useless manner, you have learned how to live.

Lin Yutang

There are many cute and hun



orous videos on the Internet showing how we spend our days and how important every day is.

You can boil it all down to hours and minutes if you like. Sometimes exercises such as this help put things in perspective. While my words may not change the world, it may just provide a new way of looking at our lives. As I'm fond of saying: try tilting your head a bit.

If we live to be 81 (average lifespan in Canada), that gives us 29,565 days, or 709,560 hours on this blue-green ball flying through space.

We all know how precious life is and we've all likely witnessed the passing of a loved one.

I've lost everyone in my original family unit. Both of my parents succumbed to cancer and my sister passed away prematurely.

While we all anticipate the loss of our parents, their departure left a void in my soul. My sister would be 58 today, with potentially plenty of time left.

Alas, our journey in life is never predictable or certain.

Some people squeeze every second of joy out of life and others fritter away precious days and weeks, often contemplating the dreary aspects of our daily lives.

I'm far from perfect. There are times when my get up and go has gone; when my steps feel like I'm wearing concrete shoes. But I always manage to deliver a smile.

We are human and given our biological inefficiencies, we need food and sleep to regenerate, taking up a great deal of our allotted time.

Here are some harsh realities of how we spend our time (they're guesstimates, so don't hold me to any accuracy).

It's estimated the average person spends 11 years of his/her life, or 99,117 hours at work! Imagine that. For those who don't love their jobs, that amounts to many painful years with one's nose to the grindstone. And of all that time, we only take about 366 sick days.

For those who spend a lot of time on the phone, you're more than familiar with being on hold. In fact, the average worker spends 4 years on the phone, and 20 weeks waiting for someone to talk to on the other end!

Imagine some of that time is spent swearing. We say bad words about 2 million times in our lives.

At home or at the office, we spend a total of 5 months complaining.

Keep the coffee flowing! If you're a coffee drinker, you'll consume about 12,000 cups of java.

Given our nature, we often dwell on things and get stressed out. It's estimated we spend 7 years laying awake at night!

Many of us enjoy our TV programs and these days, many are hooked on their electronic devices ??laptops, iPads and smart phones.

For some of us, we spent 11 years in front of the TV, trying to find something good to watch. And we'll spend 5 years online. I

expect the latter to grow significantly in the decades to come.

For commuters, I don't have to tell you how much time you spend on the road each day, driving to and from work, doing errands, etc. I feel your pain.

If you take public transit, you'll spend 653 hours waiting for your bus, train, streetcar or subway.

We all have to shop. And with that we'll wait in line for a grand total of 6 months. And housework will demand roughly 46,800 hours of our time.

Now for some good news.

We'll spend 38,003 hours eating. Who doesn't love a good meal, and breaking break with family and friends? To date, I estimate I've consumed 49,200 potato chips, 4,320 chicken wings and 15,000 bottles of beer. And yes, I do want fries with that!

We spend 115 days laughing. I bet I will have doubled that when my time is up.

Hitting the sack at night will eat up another 26 years of our lives. I'll bet there are some who think sleeping is a vocation.

On average, we'll spend 658 hours cuddling and being romantic with our spouses. Over the weekend, my wife and I discussed our daily routines (dinner, dishes, lunches for the kids, errands, etc.) and figured it leaves us only 3 hours per evening to spend time together. Boy, it doesn't seem like much in the big picture, does it?

Even though we North Americans spend 90% of our time indoors, we will walk roughly 176,000 kilometres. If you've ever taken your kids to Wonderland or the CNE, you'll know all about walking.

At 51, I've already used up 18,615 days and I only have 10,950 left! Oh, my!

So, from these startling factoids, we know what needs to be done.

Only 10% outdoors soaking up all that God gave us? We all need to get out more, enjoy nature, an evening stroll, looking up at the stars, taking in those gorgeous sunsets and coming soon, fall colours.

We simply must spend time with family and friends. This is one of the biggest sources of happiness, and it also lowers risk of heart attack, stroke and diabetes. Pleasant social interaction can be better than exercise! Did I mention beer and chicken wings?

Express gratitude ? it makes you feel better and puts a smile on people's faces. It may just add a day or two to your life.

Be more positive. We all know this, yet the monkeys are still running amok. But again, we can choose to waste our time worrying and frowning about frustrating situations, or we can remain positive.

If I were to shed my pessimism and accompanying sarcasm, what in the world would I do?

Can I honestly say there have been more good times than bad?? Yes. Do I have a lot to be thankful for? Yes ? their names are Kim, Lexie, Liam and Kyleigh.

?Time is the coin of your life. It is the only coin you have, and only you can determine how it will be spent. Be careful lest you let other people spend it for you.?

? Carl Sandburg