

We're constantly reinventing ourselves

Mark Pavilons



Is this really my life?

Has anyone else out there ever asked themselves this question?

George Bernard Shaw once observed that life is not about yourself, it's about creating yourself.

We've all likely heard hundreds of those pithy, greeting card-like sentiments about living life to its fullest and finding happiness in the small things.

Sure, there may be truths in those pearls, but enough already. Life is challenging.

For most of us, that's what makes it interesting.

Call it self-absorption or witnessing my teens mature, but I've been a bit introspective recently.

There are many events and situations that cause us to pause and reflect. We'd likely do it more often if we weren't so damn busy!

Some people thrive on the adrenaline rush that a fast-pace life provides. Some are workaholics. Others know their clear-cut boundaries and have learned to separate work from family.

I've sampled all of the above and while my juggling skills have improved immensely over the years, I'm still fine-tuning my abilities. I'm still creating myself.

By nature, and due to our physical design, we live inside our own heads. Put another way, we live for ourselves, simply because that's how we function as biological creatures. Sure, we can appreciate and empathize with others, but until we can all read minds or develop ESP, we'll never truly be one.

That said, we all have to travel life's paths alone, to an extent. Sure, we have friends, family and loved ones to help us along these roads never travelled, but our existence is a solitary one. I chalk that up to too big a brain atop a weird, ever-changing body. It's like our heads are giant gum ball machines that never run empty. You don't need any coins, just turn the knob and the gum comes spewing out, ad nauseum. New ideas and experiences keep filling the container.

But I digress.

Since we have to constantly navigate those ebbs and flows, we have to become very good sailors, or swimmers!

When life hands you lemons ... I squeeze them in my drink!

My eldest daughter Lexie is preparing for university this fall. We attended several open houses and interviews and it seems like she's going for an advanced humanities course at Western. So many courses, so many options, so many career paths.

While Kim and I are fairly bright individuals, we're confused by all of this. And it's not easy providing surefire advice in this day and age. Do we know what's the next big thing? Nope. Do we have all the answers regarding careers of the future? Nah. Do we know the secrets of happiness and success? Hell no!

Just as Lexie is uneasy about her future, so are we. It's easy to pass the buck and simply say it's your life, you figure it out.

But that archaic way of thinking just doesn't work. They need our guidance and our full support. Most of all they need our money!

I think some of us Boomers may have just settled. My dad urged me to go into computers since that was the way of the future. I

never cared for math and computer courses were still in their infancy at the time. Remember, this was before the Internet. In my case, I concentrated on my academic strengths, which included languages, English, creative writing and history. So, what does one do with such interests??My guidance counsellor at the time said basically, I?could become a teacher, or try journalism. Hmmm ... journalism. A practical application of my skills ...

So, off I?went, into a world of news, sports, features, politics, photography, thrills and spills, long nights, weekends, travel. My journey began and changed every day.

Along this incredible adventure of personal discovery, I?met thousands of people ??every shape, size, level of intelligence and prosperity. I?learned how to speak in several tongues ??double-speak and spin-doctoring. I?learned about the truth, or the closest thing to it. I?saw trials and tribulations of all kinds. I?witnessed horrible tragedies, death and destruction. Oh, the humanity!

It's much too late to question the decisions I've made in my life. There are too many to count. But each one ??every zig, zag, left turn, u-turn or no turn ??became part of my life's map. Much like footprints on a never-ending beach, my prints follow me everywhere I go. They are part of who I?am today. Maybe that's why my feet hurt!

I find it odd when people say how much their friends or loved ones ?have changed.??We all have to, it's inevitable. We all gain weight, become less romantic, lose our attention span and often become a little more skeptical. Our tastes change. We clearly define our wants and needs. We live for our children.

I don't think anyone I have ever met said they had their futures all figured out, and things went according to plan. Heck, I run into people every day in their 40s, 50s and 60s who are still reinventing themselves.

That's not a bad thing. It has nothing to do with mid-life crises, feeling nostalgic or running away from it all.

It's about constantly re-creating yourself and trying to make sense of it all.

Yes, that takes a lifetime. Evolution is a slow process, indeed.

Will there be enough time left over to really enjoy the fruits of our labour? I?hope so.

Is this really my life??Yes, yes it is!

?The privilege of a lifetime is being who you are.?

?? Joseph Campbell