

Top regrets should motivate us all

Mark Pavilons



"Regrets, I've had a few;
But then again, too few to mention.
I did what I had to do
And saw it through without exemption."

"I planned each charted course;
Each careful step along the byway,
And more, much more than this,
I did it my way."

As human beings, regret remains as one of our frailties.

That being said, we can avoid the host of emotions associated with regret if, in fact, we leave no stone unturned in our lives.

We often regret the things we failed to do, not the things we've done.

A recent online post brought the message home with "Those top 37 things you'll regret when you're old."

The number-one item was not traveling when you had the chance.

I was a late bloomer in this regard, taking my first trip abroad with my wife Kim when I was in my mid-20s. We became "hooked" and did as much travelling as we could. Of course, our jet-setting took a back seat when our youngins arrived.

Our first stop was quaint Port Lucaya in Freeport, Bahamas. It was amazing and opened up a whole new world of possibilities for us. Kim and I managed to check off a few more locales during our BK (Before Kids) time together. Admittedly, it has become much harder these days, especially with three expensive, I mean wonderful, children in tow.

Other than day trips and weekenders, we haven't been able to arrange a family vacation. I had to pass a couple of years ago when my family and in-laws all went to visit relatives in Puerto Rico, while I stayed home with the dogs.

My last trip with my son Liam to the Dominican Republic was not a holiday, but a volunteer mission trip.

My daughter Lexie, with our encouragement and support, has been quite the traveller, visiting Europe and Africa.

I would agree that if you have the chance to travel while you're young, or whenever the opportunities presents itself, grab it and take advantage of it.

This list indicates that not learning another language is a big regret.

Both of my parents were European immigrants, but we only spoke English at home. I had opportunities to learn German and

Latvian, but never really jumped in with both feet. I studied French and German in high school so I have a decent grasp, but that's it. I would love to become fluent and even learn Spanish.

Another regret on the list is missing the chance to see your favorite musicians.

I was never much of a concert-goer when I was younger. I did manage to interview a few well-known Canadians in my journalism career - Gowan and Kim Mitchell. My wife and I caught Gowan again last year, once at Rose Theatre in Brampton, and at Casino Rama with Styx.

There are a few bands I would love to see, but alas, many are no longer whole these days.

I kick myself for not getting tickets to see Robin Williams perform at Rama before he passed away.

Most of us have a few fears, some of which prevent us from doing things.

I happen to have a fear of heights. I hate roller coasters and avoid them. I would never go skydiving.

Regrets?? Not one!

One interesting regret on the list was missing the chance to ask your grandparents questions before they die.

Unfortunately, I never had the opportunity - both sets of grandparents died before I was even born. But had I had the chance, you can bet I would have spent time with them.

Risk-taking is part of being human and some of us regret not leaping forward with both feet.

This can relate to relationships, marriages and other big decisions that involve risk. Heck, almost every we do involves some level of uncertainty and putting ourselves out there.

Worrying too much was put at 33 on the list. Boy, this should be near the top for everyone!

Worrying and getting stressed out is so common today, it's almost reaching epidemic proportions.

I was a worry wart as a teen and literally sweated over tests, exams, oral presentations in school. In my early career, I was nervous before every interview. Of course, over time, we all get more accustomed with the world around us and we rise to the challenge.

Not spending enough time with loved ones was another regret.

This is an important one to keep in mind.

I have lost my entire family - mother, father, sister, and uncle - who all perished within a 10-year period. I had the horrible task of arranging all of their funerals (which included purchasing cheap caskets) and cleaning out their homes. I will never forget going through their personal belongings after they passed and regretting every single minute of time lost with each of them.

And perhaps the piece de resistance of regrets - not being grateful sooner.

Heed this, I say.

Sure, in our reckless youth and state of "me-ness," it's hard to appreciate what we have. My wife and I are constantly telling our children to not only appreciate what they have, but enjoy every day for what it is.

We are not a rich family, but if I can get one message across to my kids, it's to be thankful, and use that to see and realize their goals. I want them to be compassionate and help others along the way, too. I want them to feel alive.

I also want them to be free of regrets.

They say the funniest people tend to be the saddest. I can attest to that. Despite my ramblings and self-absorbed pity parties, I know that I'm blessed and I appreciate all that surrounds me.

Regrets, I've had a few. Knowing when to stop having them, now there's the key!