

Barbara Kay: For me, another 10 years or so sounds about right

[National Post](#) - Tuesday January 17th, 2017

There was a woman at our synagogue I knew superficially, a widow about 20 years older than me, a fine amateur artist. At long last liberated from onerous maternal and breadwinning obligations, her aging father's needs began to consume the time she had finally carved out to devote to painting.

She would bring her father to synagogue, one of the few pleasures left to him in his radically diminished life. This went on for many years. One day — I think he was well into his nineties, very zombie-like in his wheelchair by then, and she probably 75 — I asked her how her father was getting on, and she burst out, “When is it my turn?”

Now in my mid-seventies, I often think back to that *cri du coeur*. My father died at 67 and my mother in her late seventies (but already lost to Alzheimers years before). So I did not experience what I think of as the Prince Charles syndrome. Precious few children are born to inherit real crowns, but none of us is truly sovereign over our lives while the older generation lives on. Which we don't mind up to a point. And then we do. It's human nature.

There is an optimal psychological age for losing your parents. Forty is too young, 50 is very sad but not completely tragic, 60 is quite appropriate, and at 70, if your parents are still alive, you've definitely reached “when is it my turn” territory. At 70, when the nursing home calls with the news, nobody rends their garments and falls to their knees in lamentation.

I hasten to add that this is not building up as an argument for euthanasia. Even if I live to 100, which I heartily hope not to, I would still want to shuffle off the stage in the traditional way. By then of course I would have been for many years refusing not only heroic but even cowardly measures to keep me alive, apart from pain meds and a respirator (suffocation is not how I want to go).

If I had my druthers, of course, I'd drop dead at the optimal moment, namely 10 minutes before my kids begin to think “when is it my turn,” and ideally in the midst of a ping pong game with Ronny.

In 2014 Ezekiel J. Emanuel, oncologist and bioethicist, wrote an article in *The Atlantic* magazine with the eye-catching title, “Why I hope to die at 75.” The title was misleading, because he only means 75 is the age at which he will feel his life is complete and not worth prolonging by artificial means. By then he will, like me, have seen his children grown and “in the middle of their own rich lives.” He will have seen his grandchildren's lives launched. He thinks the American obsession with diet, extreme fitness and “manic desperation to cheat death and prolong life as long as possible” is absurd. Over the past 50 years, he says, “health care hasn't slowed the aging process so much as it has slowed the dying process.” Emanuel isn't interested in a long dying process.

One in three people 85 and older has Alzheimers, Emanuel notes. There will be a 300 per cent increase in the number of older Americans with dementia by 2050. Half of people over 80 will have functional limitations. Grim! But even if he stays healthy, he knows he is unlikely to be the rare exception whose creativity does not diminish. Anyone in my age bracket knows that's true. I used to be sharp as a tack. Now I am only as sharp as a fork tine.

All parents are a “looming presence” to their children. And I would add that the more dynamic and interesting the parent, the bigger the shadow they cast. When they stop being dynamic and interesting but live on, the compensating warmth of their rays is gone, but the shadow stays.

At 75, Emanuel's plan is to stop taking preventative measures like colonoscopies and cardiac stress tests. No chemo, no bypass surgery. No flu shots. And even no antibiotics. For lung disease he will accept treatment to relieve feelings of suffocation and of course pain meds, but that's about it. No dialysis. Only palliative care.

Will he follow through? He isn't even 60 yet, so 75 seems old to him. He'll likely change his mind when he gets there. I intend to follow his model — if and when I'm 85. For the children, you understand.

In his galvanizing 1969 novel, *Portnoy's Complaint*, Phillip Roth wrote, “A Jewish man with parents alive is a 15-year-old boy.” I asked my son if he felt that was true. He quickly assured me he didn't. I told him he was a very good boy and reminded him to eat his spinach.

(--image--)

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CommentsnpReady(function(){npJ('.npStoryShare .npIconComments').unbind().bind('click',function(){npJ('html, body').animate({scrollTop:npJ('#disqus_thread').offset().top});return false})})
```

LinkedIn

Tumblr

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FarkIt

StumbleUpon

Topics: Full Comment, Ezekiel Emanuel, Phillip Roth, Prince Charles

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jQuery( document ).ready( function() {
```

```
googletag.cmd.push(function() {
```

```
var gpt_bigboxtop = googletag.
```

```
defineSlot ("/3081/npo_opin/full-comment/story", [[300,250],[300,251],[300,600],[300,601]] , 'gpt-bigboxtop');
adSlots.push( gpt_bigboxtop ); gpt_bigboxtop.addService( googletag.pubads() )
.setTargeting(
'loc'
, "top" )

; pnJustInTime.route(
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);

});
});
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Full Comment Videos(function() { pnShowVideo("1_9hi1opyb", 179363, "", "", "false", "", "", "kaltura", "playlist", "http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/video/{videoId}", null, ""); })(); Post Picks

First look: How I lost all self-respect as an auto reviewer when the veil came off the 2018 Ford Mustang (--image--)

Derek McNaughton: As the cover comes off and the full-blown car is seen for the first time by anyone without a Ford badge, 'Whoaaa!' jumps from my throat

Do you remember who Rob Schneider is? Let him remind you, as he 'explains' civil rights to civil rights leader John Lewis (--image--) For the record, Lewis was with King on the day of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963 and during the 1965 march from Selma to Montgomery

Would you like a pool in your living room? One of Calgary's richest oil tycoons is selling his home for \$9.9M (--image--) The 65-hectare property boasts an 11,500 sq.-ft. house featuring six bedrooms, five bathrooms, a private squash court and views of the Rocky Mountains

'Slobproof' furniture line gets one stressed mom the last laugh: it makes her \$1 million a year (--image--) Walls dusted with Cheetos and drapes used as dinner napkins finally got to her

Amid work as Uber driver and countless rounds of golf, ex-NHLer Mike Commodore ponders post-hockey career (--image--) Many can't understand why he'd want to even contemplate leaving this lifestyle

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(--image--) FP Comment Terence Corcoran: Trudeau's Liberals just got struck by the first shot in Canada's carbon-tax rebellion Making Canadian energy more expensive is a no-win plan against Trump's America Trudeau and Trump won't change the Canada-U.S. alliance

```
jQuery( document ).ready( function() {  
  
  googletag.cmd.push(function() {  
  
    var gpt_bigboxbot = googletag.  
  
    defineSlot ("/3081/npo_opin/full-comment/story", [[300,250],[300,253],[300,600],[300,603]] , 'gpt-bigboxbot');  
    adSlots.push( gpt_bigboxbot ); gpt_bigboxbot.addService( googletag.pubads() )  
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      'loc'  
      , "bot" )  
  
    ; pnJustInTime.route(  
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}  
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```
var NPFreeScreen = NPFreeScreen || {};  
NPFreeScreen.ajaxUrl = 'http://news.nationalpost.com/wp-admin/admin-ajax.php';  
NPFreeScreen.nonce = '1179063760';_fskparameters=[];  
if ( localStorage && localStorage.getItem("janrainCaptureToken") ) {  
  _fskparameters['_sid'] = localStorage.getItem("npPostPointsSid");  
  if ( !_fskparameters['_sid'] ) {  
    _fskparameters['_sid'] = "";  
  }  
} else {  
  _fskparameters['_sid'] = "";  
}
```

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janrain.settings.borderColor = '#ffffff';  
janrain.settings.fontFamily = 'Helvetica, Lucida Grande, Verdana, sans-serif';
```

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janrain.settings.width = 300;  
janrain.settings.actionText = ' '  
janrain.settings.capture.modalCloseHtml = ' '  
janrain.settings.capture.noModalBorderInlineCss = true;
```

```
janrain.settings.capture.flowName = 'standard';
```

Sign Up / Sign In

With your existing account from:

```
{* loginWidget *}
```

or with your account:

```
{* #signInForm *}
```

```
{* signInEmailAddress *}
```

```
{* currentPassword *}
```

Forgot your password?

Sign In

Create Account

```
{* /signInForm *}
```

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Sign in to your account

Welcome back, {* welcomeName *}!

{* loginWidget *}

Not {* welcomeName *}? Switch Account

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Sign in to your account

Welcome Back, {* welcomeName *}!

{* #signInForm *}

{* signInEmailAddress *}

{* currentPassword *}

Sign In

{* /signInForm *}

Not {* welcomeName *}? Switch Account

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Account Deactivated

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Account Reactivation Failed

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Email Verification Required

You must verify your email address before signing in. Check your email for your verification email, or enter your email address in the form below to resend the email.

{* #resendVerificationForm *}

{* signInEmailAddress *}

{* /resendVerificationForm *}

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Almost Done!

Please confirm your details below.

{* #socialRegistrationForm *}

{* firstName *}

{* lastName *}

{* emailAddress *}

{* displayName *}

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Birthdate{* birthdate *}

Gender{* gender *}

Attention Print Newspaper SubscribersFor verification of Print Subscriber offers (e.g. epaper, Digital Access, Subscriber Rewards), please input your Print Newspaper subscription phone number and postal code.

{* phone *}

{* addressPostalCode *}

By clicking "Create Account", I hereby grant permission to Postmedia to use my account information to create my account.

I also accept and agree to be bound by Postmedia's Terms and Conditions with respect to my use of the Site and I have read and understand Postmedia's Privacy Statement. I consent to the collection, use, maintenance, and disclosure of my information in accordance with the Postmedia's Privacy Policy.

{* backButton *}

{* /socialRegistrationForm *}

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Please confirm your details below. Already have an account? [Sign In](#).

{* #registrationForm *}

{* firstName *}

{* lastName *}

{* emailAddress *}

{* displayName *}

{* newPassword *}

{* newPasswordConfirm *}

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Gender{* gender *}

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{* phone *}

{* addressPostalCode *}

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{* backButton *}

{* /registrationForm *}

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Verfiy your email

We have sent you a confirmation email to { * emailAddressData * }. Please check your inbox and follow the instructions to confirm your email address.

Close

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Create a new password

Follow these simple steps to create a new password:

1. Enter your email address below
2. Wait for the instructions to arrive in your inbox
3. Follow the instructions to update your password

{ * #forgotPasswordForm * }

{ * signInEmailAddress * }

{ * backButton * }

{ * /forgotPasswordForm * }

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Create a new password

We've sent an email with instructions to create a new password. Your existing password has not been changed.

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{* mergeAccounts {"custom": true} *}

Merge Your Accounts

{| rendered_current_photo |}

{| current_displayName |}

{| current_emailAddress |}

{| foundExistingAccountText |} {| current_emailAddress |}.

{| moreInfoHoverText |}

{| existing_displayName |} - {| existing_provider |} : {| existing_siteName |} {| existing_createdDate |}

{| moreInfoText |}

{| existing_displayName |}

{| existing_provider_emailAddress |}

Created {| existing_createdDate |} at {| existing_siteName |}

{| connectLegacyRadioText |}

{| createRadioText |} {| current_provider |}

Validating

{| connect_button |}

{| create_button |}

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Sign in to complete account merge

{* #signInForm *}
{* signInEmailAddress *}
{* currentPassword *}

{* backButton *}

Sign In

{* /signInForm *}

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Resend Verification Email

Sorry, we could not verify your email address. Please enter your email below, and we'll resend the instructions for email verification.

{* #resendVerificationForm *}
{* signInEmailAddress *}

{* /resendVerificationForm *}

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Verification Email Sent

Check your email for a link to verify your email address.

Close

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Email Verified

Thank you for verifying your email address.

Close

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Change Password

{* #changePasswordFormNoAuth *}

{* newPassword *}

{* newPasswordConfirm *}

{* /changePasswordFormNoAuth *}

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Password Changed

Your password has been successfully updated.

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Create New Password

We didn't recognize that password reset code. Please enter your email below, and we'll send you a new code to reset your password.

{* #resetPasswordForm *}

{* signInEmailAddress *}

{* /resetPasswordForm *}

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Create New Password

We've sent you an email with instructions to create a new password. Your existing password has not been changed.

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/* */

/* */

//

```
_tkq = window._tkq || [];  
_stq = window._stq || [];  
_tkq.push(['storeContext', {'blog_id':'37979189','blog_tz':'-5','user_lang':'en','blog_lang':'en','user_id':'0'}]);  
_stq.push(['view', {'blog':'37979189','v':'wpcom','tz':'-5','user_id':'0','post':'1295644','subd':'nationalpostcom'}]);  
function st_vt() {var  
x=document.createElement("img");x.src="http://pixel.wp.com/g.gif?v=wpcomvt&tz=-5&user_id=0&post=1295644&subd=nationalpostcom&rand="+Math.random();}  
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```

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_stq.push([ 'clickTrackerInit', '37979189', '1295644' ]);

(--image--)

if ( 'object' === typeof wpcom_mobile_user_agent_info ) {

wpcom_mobile_user_agent_info.init();
var mobileStatsQueryString = "";

if( false !== wpcom_mobile_user_agent_info.matchedPlatformName )
mobileStatsQueryString += "&x_" + 'mobile_platforms' + '=' +
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if( false !== wpcom_mobile_user_agent_info.matchedUserAgentName )
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wpcom_mobile_user_agent_info.matchedUserAgentName;

if( wpcom_mobile_user_agent_info.isIPad() )
mobileStatsQueryString += "&x_" + 'ipad_views' + '=' + 'views';

if( "" !== mobileStatsQueryString ) {
new Image().src = document.location.protocol + '//pixel.wp.com/g.gif?v=wpcom-no-pv' + mobileStatsQueryString +
'&baba=' + Math.random();
}

}

//right rail native ads position
jQuery(document).ready(function(){
if (jQuery("#npContentSide .pn_kultura").length>0) {
jQuery("#npContentSide .pn_kultura").prev("#npContentSide
.npGutterBot:not(.npAd)").removeClass("npGutterBot").css("margin-bottom", "30px");
}
});

jQuery(document).on('keydown', '.sponsored-icon img', function() {
jQuery(this).click();
});

jQuery(document).on('click', '.sponsored-icon>img', function() {
var popUpBox=jQuery(this).next(".sponsored-icon-popup");
if (popUpBox.css("display")=='none') {
popUpBox.fadeIn("slow");
} else {
popUpBox.fadeOut("slow");
}
});

jQuery(document).on('click', '.sponsored-icon-popup>img', function() {
```

```
jQuery(this).parent().fadeOut("slow");
});
```

```
jQuery(document).on('click', '.sponsored-icon>input[type=image]', function() {
var popUpBox=jQuery(this).next(".sponsored-icon-popup");
if (popUpBox.css("display")=='none') {
popUpBox.fadeIn("slow");
popUpBox.focus();
} else {
popUpBox.fadeOut("slow");
}
});
```

```
jQuery(document).on('click', '.sponsored-icon-popup>input[type=image]', function() {
jQuery(this).parent().fadeOut("slow");
});
```

```
window.fbAsyncInit = function() {
FB.init({
appId : '114466555268868',
xfbml : true,
version : 'v2.4'
});
};
(function(d, s, id){
var js, fjs = d.getElementsByTagName(s)[0];
if (d.getElementById(id)) {return;}
js = d.createElement(s); js.id = id;
js.src = "//connect.facebook.net/en_US/sdk.js";
fjs.parentNode.insertBefore(js, fjs);
}(document, 'script', 'facebook-jssdk'));
```

(--image--)

```
var _sf_async_config = {uid: 34988, domain: 'postmedia.com', sections:'nationalpost.com,nationalpost_full comment',
path: window.location.pathname};
_sf_async_config.authors = 'Barbara Kay';(function(){
function loadChartbeat() {
window._sf_endpt = (new Date()).getTime();
var e = document.createElement('script');
e.setAttribute('type', 'text/javascript');
```

```
e.setAttribute('src',
(('https:' == document.location.protocol) ? 'https://a248.e.akamai.net/chartbeat.download.akamai.com/102508/' :
'http://') +
'static.chartbeat.com/js/chartbeat_video.js');
document.body.appendChild(e);
}
var oldonload = window.onload;
window.onload = typeof window.onload !== 'function' ? loadChartbeat : function () {
oldonload();
loadChartbeat();
};
}());
```

```
var _gaq = _gaq || [];
_gaq.push(['_setAccount', 'UA-17097415-1']);
_gaq.push(['_setDomainName', document.location.hostname]);
_gaq.push(['_trackPageview']);
(function() {
var ga = document.createElement('script'); ga.type = 'text/javascript'; ga.async = true;
ga.src = ('https:' == document.location.protocol ? 'https://ssl' : 'http://www') + '.google-analytics.com/ga.js';
var s = document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(ga, s);
})();
```

```
var _comscore = _comscore || [];
_comscore.push({ c1: '2', c2: '10276888' });
(function() {
var s = document.createElement('script'), el = document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.async = true;
s.src = (document.location.protocol == 'https:' ? 'https://sb' : 'http://b') + '.scorecardresearch.com/beacon.js';
el.parentNode.insertBefore(s, el);
})();
```

(--image--)

/* */

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