

Thoughts for the Day March 2018

3/31/18

Goofy things you discover late in life... I had to make up a bunch of three ring binders for a class. Someone suggested that I buy paper already three-hole punched to save myself the hassle of doing that myself. How did I not know they sell paper in bulk already three-hole punched.

3/30/18

Its Friday. Good Friday. Is lent really over? Can I swear again? Dang. I have to say that I was not a perfect angel, but I am swearing much less than I was, which in my mind is a good thing.

3/29/18

I'm still doing Duolingo to learn some Spanish. I really should take a class in-person somewhere if I am going to seriously do this. The on-line class is a fun way to pass time, but I am never even going to be conversational in Spanish this way.

3/28/18

I am trying to perfect the art of steaming a tamale. I haven't quite got it yet. Any suggestions would be appreciated. I haven't tried a pressure cooker, but I am considering it. Please email me with your favorite way of cooking a tamale.

3/27/18

I am procrastinating on doing the last part of my taxes and sending in my return and the money to the IRS. That is how I will be spending Easter weekend because I want them done.

3/26/18

Still working on plans for a vacation. Not sure about the location, but probably somewhere warm. It snowed while I was at work last Friday. It didn't really stick or anything, but it'd be nice to have some days in the 70s soon.

3/25/18

Yesterday was the March for Our Lives. I hope it changes the way people think about guns and laws in the U.S.. I am cynical when it comes to this issue. Personally I believe gun ownership is an individual decision. But there should be sensible restrictions regarding who can buy a gun and certain firearms should remain in the hands of the military and not civilians. Although school shootings are somewhat rare, they aren't rare enough. I remember earthquake and fire drills when I was a kid. I am glad that I never had to practice locking down the school because there might be a shooter on campus. It's unreasonable to make children experience this on a regular basis.

3/24/18

For many years I would make and send postcards. I got out of the habit of doing that. I started making them again recently, but haven't sent any out. I think I want to get more done before they start traveling. But brace yourself for my homemade postcards.

3/23/18

Something that I believe is important is recognizing that our emotions tell us things. There was a book called the "Gift of Fear". We all have instincts and emotional reactions. That book's premise was to get people to pay attention to what our emotions are telling us rather than being dismissive of them. If we are afraid, its our way of alerting ourselves to "Be careful!" Rather than react in a knee-jerk fashion to our emotions, if we take time to really think, "What are my emotions trying to tell me?" the odds of reacting in a reasonable manner increase. Experiment with this and see how you are feeling and thinking after you do take a moment to ask yourself, "What are my emotions telling me?"

3/22/18

What are ways to emotionally strengthen yourself? First is to find safe places and times to experience emotions if they are scary or overwhelming. That way if they feel like they are washing over you like a tidal wave you won't end up acting out or being destructive in places like school or at work. As you feel more comfortable with your emotions, start venturing out into the "real world" and let yourself experience emotions in more public places. Being strong requires practice in multiple settings. As a result, just because you can be emotionally present at home, doesn't mean that it's true at work, school or in other situations without some practice. The key is safely exposing yourself in a gradually increasing array of situations until it feels more comfortable.

I believe a second aspect to this is to put yourself in situations where you feel competent. The sense of mastery in one type of situation can give us confidence when in other less comfortable environments. Building new successes on the foundation of other successes you have experienced in the past works well.

3/21/18

I like songs about love, and love lost. Part 2. The song "Ghost" by the Indigo Girls is one of those songs about love lost and the remnants of that experience that haunt you. Sometimes we protect our heart to minimize the chances of feeling hurt, rejected, or disappointed. But if you restrict your emotions you not only avoid pain, but don't generally get to experience positive emotions as well. The key is strengthening yourself so that you not only get to experience joy and happiness, but don't feel mortally wounded when you are feeling sad, powerless, and other emotions that can be difficult. Because that is life. And if you have never felt the earth move when you were in love, you haven't lived.

3/20/18

I like love songs. Recently I have been listening to "I Feel the Earth Move" by Carole King from the 70s. What a great song about that feeling when you fall in love and everything gets shaken up in your world in a good way. There is nothing quite like that feeling.

3/19/18

I got a haircut which is much shorter than usual. I am not thrilled with it to be honest. But the good thing about hair is that it always seems to grow back and you get another chance.

3/18/18

A funny thing sometimes happens in therapy. A client gives you an assignment to read a book, or watch a movie, or experience something that gives you insight into their life experience. I have had this happen on more than one occasion. It is interesting to see what inspires the people you work with to be better at whatever or whoever they want to be. My client recently suggested that I read "The New Jim Crow" as a white man working with people of color in the legal system. He was right it was important to read.

3/17/18

March Madness... I am not a huge college basketball fan. But it is fun to root for the home team - Gonzaga. So far so good.

3/16/18

It's Friday. Looking forward to the weekend. No big plans. And no big obligations. Always a nice way to spend time.

3/15/18

Separating our clients successes and failures from ourselves as therapists can be tough at times. It's more difficult when our clients stumble and fall, and you wonder "Could I have done more to help this person?" Sometimes we might've been able to offer something we didn't. Other times, it's simply life, and people having to learn the hard way, and our job as therapists is about helping them pick themselves back up and trying again more than anything else.

3/14/18

Pi Day - the birthday of my dad and Einstein - 50 years apart. I don't believe my dad ever met Einstein, but had one degree of separation from him. My dad had family members that were geniuses in the sciences. And they ran in that circle of people. My dad's parents had a first cousin in common who was a Nobel prize winner in physics. And his sister married another Nobel prize winner. I am in awe of that level of intelligence. There are a lot of things one can be grateful for, and I feel fortunate to be born to parents with well above average intelligence. One of my dad's favorite things to do was make up stories for us at bedtime. My mom would read to us, and my dad would make up stories. As smart as my dad was, he also had a creative side to him.

3/13/18

Not so much fun watching PSG with Neymar injured and not playing. Manchester United is my premier league team. And Tottenham are the team I love to hate.

3/12/18

I'm part of an on-line community that is rewarding yet annoying at times too. I have been taking a vacation from that community for over a month now. It has felt good do other things. The old saying "absence makes the heart grow fonder" is so true. I haven't been gone quite long enough to go back, but I am getting close.

3/11/18

Did you "spring forward" in the wee hours of this morning? Don't forget to change your clocks that don't automatically do that on their own.

3/10/18

The word "love" being discussed in the therapy room can raise the anxiety level of even the most seasoned therapist. While not wanting to give the client the wrong idea, at the same time being overly rigid when the subject comes up can be damaging to the client as well. When the subject is discussed in therapy it can be very powerful. Discussing what the therapy process offers that is missing in a person's life is important. The therapist needs to be kind, yet careful to ensure that their client isn't becoming overly dependent on them. This week I had a wonderful conversation with a client about this subject.

3/9/18

Both of the regular therapists who lead the Wednesday group weren't able to be at work a couple weeks ago. I subbed for them. I have to say that it was fun to lead that group. In addition to the usual check-ins, a client was presenting an assignment about relationship development. This is probably my favorite assignment that clients complete. Rather than randomly go into relationships, I encourage people to create a template for the qualities they are looking for in a dating partner, as well as things that would be deal breakers. I also encourage them to create a rough time table for the pace that the relationship develops. Rarely do the template and real life match up exactly. But when people have some general ideas of what they want they seem to get more of what they want.

3/8/18

Happy Birthday Mom! I feel fortunate to be in my 50s and have my mom still around and in reasonably good health. And while she may have physical ailments, her mind appears to be sharp as a tack. I admire that she has not only intelligence but wisdom as well. And not only that she is a person with a huge social support network. For her 80th birthday she invited 100 friends and family to celebrate. And it's no lie that she knew every person who was in that room on more than a superficial level. Most people have a few close friends and perhaps more acquaintances. In addition to being a great mom, she is obviously a good friend too. What an amazing person!

3/7/18

I was told that I annoyed one of my state rep's staff last week. Should I apologize for getting indignant that my rep's staff wouldn't tell me his position on a piece of legislation? I don't know.

But I do know. And I did apologize. Because it doesn't do any good to go around irritating people. And I was irritating. And apologies don't cost anything when you get your ego and self-righteousness out of the way. And today is a much better day because I apologized.

3/6/18

For some reason I was inspired to listen to Russian folk music recently. My high school Russian teacher not only had us learn the basics of the language, but also had us do things like recite poetry and sing songs in Russian. 40 years later it's fun to sing along with Russian folk songs on YouTube. "Those Were the Days" is probably my favorite. There is a version by the Leningrad Cowboys with the Red Army Ensemble which is a hybrid of English and Russian, which I like the most.

3/5/18

I have been watching a couple bills in the Washington State legislature this session relating to work. The first would decriminalize sexting between peer-aged teens, rather than keeping it as a felony with sex offender registration. There was support for the bill but it ran out of time because this is a short-session (even years in Washington State have short sessions). The other bill would have removed the statute of limitations for certain serious sex offenses. In general I supported this bill, but it did not make any provisions if the crime occurred while the person was a minor. I hope that both bills return next year, but perhaps with some language that views kids differently than adults when it comes to the statute of limitations.

3/4/18

Today is truly the day to listen to some John Philip Sousa. Stars and Stripes Forever. Happy Birthday Jim Claussen.

3/3/18

The past weekend I was at a professional conference. As informative as the conference was, the networking was probably even more helpful. One of my colleagues made me laugh harder than I can remember laughing in a long time. It was a truly an "Oh My God" moment. As much as that phrase is over-used, it isn't an overstatement in this case. My colleagues are an amazing bunch for doing what we do, and not losing our senses of humor along the way. Thanks to all of you for being an amazing crew.

3/2/18

I have a colleague who is fascinated by the overall downward trend in crime statistics. Regardless of financial conditions, it appears to be continuing to occur. One of the hypotheses about this has been because of the removal of lead from many products, and most notably from paint and gasoline. Lead is a neuro-toxin and has been prevalent in the air we breathe, water we drink, and products we use. Getting the "lead out" may have been one of the biggest crime prevention strategies implemented in modern times, and it is somewhat of an inadvertent one. People thought it would help improve health, but decreasing the amount of crime occurring.... That's amazing.

3/1/18

Words always seem to trigger thoughts for me. It's the first of March. And whenever it's this time of year, I think about time MARCHING on. I have an old friend who was born on March 4th, which also evokes the same thoughts. Time to play a little John Philip Sousa in honor of March-ing.