

May 2018 Thoughts for the Day

5/31/18

I was around two people from Connecticut recently and listened to them reminisce about their favorite memories of that area. It was like listening to Klinger on M*A*S*H talking about Toledo. Where is your hometown and do you wax poetic about your time spent there? I generally take pride in my childhood hometown but I wouldn't say I romanticize my time growing up there.

5/30/18

It's funny because whenever I feel like totally changing up my life, I have sort of a standing offer for a job on the Big Island that I dream about taking... However, it's become much less tempting, even though it would be on the opposite side of the island from the volcano.

5/29/18

When people have fears, helping them desensitize themselves to the thing(s) that trigger them takes away the power that the triggers have over the person. Recently I helped a person expose himself to one of his triggers. This process does not "cure" the person with one exposure therapy session. It takes time, and it also takes patience as the person gradually increases the intensity of the triggers they expose themselves to. It needs to be done in a safe context so that the trigger isn't reinforced in the wrong direction. It's easy to tell someone to face their fears. But.... Are you willing to be present with the person while they do this? Are you willing to sit with someone as their irrational fear takes hold of them and they bravely stay present and live through it? Anxiety disorders are very treatable if people are willing to face what triggers them, and gradually regain a sense of control over their reactions to it.

5/28/18

Memorial Day - the day to remember and honor all the people who have fallen before us.

5/27/18

A friend of a friend's adult daughter is addicted to opiates. They were able to get her to start suboxone to try and get her stabilized. The friend was telling me that the family is hoping that this may finally be the solution. Like with any maladaptive behavior - there has to be motivation within the person to change their life or it'll never work. Hopefully this woman is ready to reclaim her life. If not, maybe the suboxone will buy some time for her to get to that place. God opiates are an insidious class of drugs.

5/26/18

My brother was telling me he got stung by a bee last week. And I just received my first mosquito bite. I guess it is a sign that summer is already.

5/25/18

This weekend is my maternal grandmother's birthday. If she was alive she'd be 115 on Monday. That's so weird.

5/24/18

Someone recently posted on a Prince message board how much they enjoyed Prince's last complete show at Paisley Park. I couldn't agree more. Prince opened the show with a song called "Wow", and did it with a somewhat unusual arrangement. Throughout the show Prince was crying as he sang certain songs. When singing your own material brings out that much emotion when you perform it, that is truly powerful.

Taking that trip to see Prince is probably one of the most memorable experiences of my life. JT (the most dedicated Prince fan I know) recorded the show. Hearing Prince, but also hearing ourselves reacting to the show adds to its impact. JT has a soundboard of that show which has amazing sound

quality. But hearing the interplay of Prince with the audience from JT's recording makes this recording incredibly special.

5/23/18

Recently I talked to someone in their late 30s who is starting to feel old. It's interesting to me since I am in my 50s and when I was in my late thirties I didn't feel that way at all. Accepting one's age gracefully is tough to do. For me it reminds me to make sure I am living in the moment because you will never get that time back once it is gone.

5/22/18

The stack of unpaid bills is piling up on my desk. I need to pay them. One of my least favorite tasks of all. I'd vacuum, do windows and clean the bathroom not to have to pay bills.

5/21/18

I have continued doing my on-line Spanish lessons. I finally started learning the dative case. It's amazing how much you end up learning about your own native language by learning a 2nd, or additional language.

5/20/18

Sometimes people feel that asking someone about their preferred gender pronouns is goofy and unnecessary. However, if gender pronouns were used in reference to you that didn't match your sense of self, it would be seriously annoying at a minimum. I met someone who uses "they" as a generic pronoun to avoid problems. That may seem awkward, but it is safer than assuming incorrectly and offending the person.

5/19/18

Have you ever tried complimenting someone who is spewing negativity at you. It is an interesting dynamic to experience. As they go negative, you go positive. It has to be done sincerely and genuinely. However, if you can do it, it can disarm the person and let them know you aren't looking for a fight or to have an antagonistic relationship with them.

5/18/18

It's never fun reporting clients and/or their families to CPS because of something said in session. However, I do my best to let people know what the mandated reporting laws are and what to expect. I also generally tell people I am going to make the report (unless there is a safety issue in doing so) so that there isn't a surprise phone call or visit from CPS or law enforcement.

5/17/18

My peonies are about to burst open in bright fuchsia. Last year was a blockbuster year with the number of blooms. This year looks like it'll be more average. But even so, it's still going to be beautiful.

5/16/18

Lots of people I have been around have been talking about fishing now that the weather is getting nicer. I have fond memories of fishing while growing up. But I stopped as an adult. I am not sure why. Time to get some gear and get back into it.

5/15/18

I think I finally got rid of all the aphids on my plants in my office planter box. I wish the predators could keep up with the aphids, but they can't. I use a non-toxic soap spray to get rid of the aphids. It's not harmful to people or animals, just certain bugs.

5/14/18

On a similar note to yesterday's post. Do you have a friend or loved one who is struggling in life? Do this one simple thing for them. Tell them that they matter. Maybe it isn't apparent to them at the moment. Therefore tell them that you are happy you know them. It may sound or feel corny. But we all need encouragement at times.

5/13/18

Mother's Day.... One of my least favorite phrases that some mothers will say to their child is "I brought you into this world, I can take you out." I wish that all mothers would say "I brought you into this world and I will love and cherish that decision my entire life." Imagine if every kid heard that from his/her mother, even on the days when they are being a total brat or complete jerk. I am fortunate to have a mother who I know loves and cherishes the idea of having had all three of her children, even on our worst days. Thanks Mom!

5/12/18

A colleague and I met with a new client and his support person last week. One of my goals in doing informed consent before starting an evaluation or treatment is to answer as many questions as people have and try to help them feel educated in making decisions. Sometimes that means that they continue to work with me or a colleague at my office and other times it means they won't. But my goal is that clients have as few surprises in the evaluation or treatment process as possible. Life throws everyone enough curve balls, I try not to add to that.

5/11/18

InCel in the news... People who feel they are involuntarily celibate. The cruelty of the world paired with social media can make life very difficult. In spite of this I would argue that the term InCel is inaccurate because if you work at it I believe there is someone for everyone out there. Perhaps you can't attract the model beautiful person when you are average in your outward appearance. But that doesn't make you involuntarily celibate. It means you need to find someone who is equally attractive and work at being in a relationship or work on your skills in having sex. For those who are "involuntarily" single or celibate, I would argue you aren't willing to put in the work to be anything else. And perhaps you aren't willing or able to let yourself be vulnerable. And to blame the world for being a cruel place isn't a very practical approach because the world is going to be the way it is.

What most people need are friends and support people who will encourage them to take a risk and put themselves out there. Who will be there to help you get back up if you fall or get knocked down. However, generally associating with people who will reinforce your notions that the world is a cruel and inhospitable place is not an effective strategy to be happier. It only breeds more fear and isolation. Although therapy is not for everyone, it can be very useful in these situations. Especially group therapy. If therapy isn't your thing, 12 Step groups can also offer that feeling of support and fellowship.

When people have been knocked down repeatedly by life, they sometimes have this sense of entitlement. They have an idea that they are entitled to a relationship, or to people who will be sexual with them. And that it is not fair that it comes so easily to some people, but not them. Well if you focus on whether it is fair or not, you are going to generally scare away any potential partner. It is true that the average InCel person probably will have to work harder to find someone willing to have sex with them, or even spend time with them in real life. And they can sit at home typing on messages boards and reinforce their feelings that life isn't fair, but that isn't going to get them a dating or sex partner. However, if they work on changing themselves to be more attractive to potential dating partners that will. And it is every individual's choice regarding which is the path that they will take.

5/10/18

It is interesting to work with people who think they can get along all by themselves. Whether they are naturally introverted, or feel burned by people so much so that they don't trust or some combination of both, it is tough to get them to let people in. But we as humans definitely do better when we let other people in our lives to support us.

5/9/18

I led the DBT skills class yesterday. I don't think I could ever be a teacher. Making and presenting lesson plans 6 times a day every day. Oh lord that would be a chore. Maybe I would pray for a school with block schedules so it would only be 3ish classes per day. Although I do like the subject matter, and maybe that's part of what keeps teachers going.

5/8/18

I had a nice dialog via email with a colleague. He challenged me to think about an issue in a different way than I had viewed it. At first I was reluctant. But then when I read my original email that I sent to him, I realized that when I distanced myself from the emotions, he was on the money. And I had to remind myself that I had sent him the email for a reason. And it wasn't just to tell me I was right.

5/7/18

A past employee of mine died of pancreatic cancer over a decade ago. This person worked on my evaluations.

Her daughter sent me a message letting me know when she passed away. She worked on reports until a couple days before she died. The news of her passing shocked me because she and I had just communicated with her about a report. When I asked her daughter about this, she told me that her mom always felt she was helping me do important work and doing what she did for me felt quite meaningful. She told me her mom had stopped doing almost everything, but she wouldn't give up working on my reports. I like to think I am a loyal person, and I hope I inspire loyalty in return. This was one of those experiences when you realize how special a relationship you had. May you rest in peace Sue. I miss you.

5/6/18

Are you depressed? One of the best medicines for depression is doing something. Generally it is less important what you do, than the fact that you are doing something. However, if what you are doing is something destructive, that is obviously not helpful. But doing almost anything when you are depressed is better than doing nothing. If you are feeling blue, get out and do!

5/5/18

Cinco de Mayo - the holiday many American's believe is Mexican Independence Day. Except it's not, because that's in mid-September. The 5th of May is when Mexico defeated France. The underdog triumphed for the moment, until France came back and decisively won. However, with the help of their neighbors to the north, Mexico was eventually able to expel the French.

5/4/18

Nine years ago today I watched you (dad) take your last breaths at Overlake Hospital with my mom and niece Danielle. As I grow older I appreciate your struggles to be a good husband, father, and human being. You didn't always succeed but I know you did your best. Life is tough and full of gray areas where there is no apparent right answer. I miss you and your willingness to be a sounding board for me and others. As a person who survived WWII when many of your family members didn't, you had a unique perspective. Your life was definitely meaningful, probably in part because of the extreme difficulties you experienced.

5/3/18

Pain is an interesting thing. It can be difficult to treat, and sometimes taking it easy is the best medicine. I tweaked my back last week and felt miserable. Today is the first day that my back feels much better. As a guy who likes to walk a lot, it was tough to just lounge around. But the more I rested last week the better my back felt. Sometimes doing less is better.

5/2/18

A current debate within my field - Should people on probation be allowed to smoke marijuana? My opinion is "it depends." Did the person's crime revolve around using substances, buying/selling substances, etc...?" If so I believe that it is a reasonable prohibition. If not, then I also ask about whether they can consume alcohol or is that prohibited? It appears that the research behind alcohol use and criminal behavior is stronger than there being research that supports marijuana use leading to crime. The grand experiments that are going on primarily on the west coast of the US will be interesting to follow over time.

5/1/18

May Day - Spring has sprung. My peonies are happy again this year. They have their buds and everything.