

July 2018 Thoughts for the Day

7/31/18

It's been a year since I started writing my thoughts for the day. I wondered last year how long I would stick with this little project. It's now part of my routine to update this page on my website. I hope those of you who have read through this have enjoyed it as much as I have enjoyed writing it.

7/30/18

Some people really aren't in a place to be in a relationship. Having a pet can be a nice way to not feel alone and get one's need for touch met. There is nothing like having a cat sitting on your lap purring away. Or a dog that gets all excited, wagging its tail and running up to you when you get home. Don't feel bad if there isn't a Mr. or Ms. Right in your life currently. And consider a pet. They generally will be much more unconditionally loving than humans are.

7/29/18

A family member recently got a puppy. I think they forgot how time consuming it is to train one. But it is time well spent, because it sets the tone for the rest of the dog's life with you. The effort they're putting in now will pay off for them down the road. But cleaning up accidents and lost sleep in the moment can make one wonder.

7/28/18

Time to relax. As important as it is to exercise one's brain and body, it is also important to give both time to relax and recuperate. Friday nights into Saturday mornings tend to be my time to sleep a lot. I love going to bed early on Friday night, and sleep in Saturday morning. Then I am ready to have fun on Saturday and Sunday, and go back to work on Monday.

7/27/18

Change is difficult, even when positive and exciting. Our brains get programmed to do things in certain ways, and when we upset the status quo our brains have to work a little harder. And our brains can be lazy and draw us back to old ways of doing things, because our brain can then go back to working on auto-pilot. It requires more effort and attention in the beginning to have our brain do things in different ways than it normally does. But over time our brains do adjust and the new way of doing things becomes more routine.

7/26/18

From the back end of websites, even my small one, there are stats you can see about viewership. I don't pay for a lot of details, so I can only see so much. But it is interesting to see when people from different parts of the country, or from other parts of the world are viewing my site. I can see whether people come directly to my site, or whether they are referred by a search engine. Cool stuff. Just realize that it is very easy for people to see what you are doing on-line.

7/25/18

I went to Tacoma this past weekend for a concert. It was a refreshing change from seeing a show in Seattle. The people attending were the most unpretentious and fun. They were anti-hipsters. Go Tacoma!

7/24/18

At the end of my father's life he had a significant decline in his cognitive functioning. It made it difficult at times, because the once sharp man had difficulty with things he shouldn't have. Nonetheless, he did remember his family members and enjoyed the time he spent with us. I had lunch or dinner with him most weeks during the last years of his life. I am so glad I spent that time with him.

7/23/18

Growing up my family went to church camp at Seabeck several times a year. My parents continued to attend even when we kids stopped going. When my dad died they planted a dogwood tree in his memory. Some of his ashes were buried with the tree. It is a beautiful living reminder of my dad at one of his favorite places on earth.



7/22/18

I have had several clients recently who have distanced themselves from really important support people in their lives. At times we can let relatively minor grievances turn into something major. The most recent person I talked with was coming around to seeing that in the grand scheme of things, their unhappiness with the decision a person made is relatively minor compared to the overall support and love that they provide for one another. And I punctuated this idea with the following.... Life is precious and unpredictable. And if the last interaction you had with this person was related to holding onto a relatively minor grudge, how is that going to feel when they are dead and there is no reconciliation possible? Make amends with people who are important to you. You never know when it may be too late and you don't get that chance.

7/21/18

Whether you think about the "serenity prayer" from 12 Step programs, or "Radical Acceptance" from DBT skills training, the ability to tolerate your thoughts and emotions when you are powerless to change a situation is really important. It is incredibly difficult to do at times. The key is using your

energy to get through the tough times and focus on what is within your control. When you are emotionally overwhelmed it can be difficult to think clearly. It is easy to make mistakes or waste energy trying to change something that isn't going to change. This is when it is crucial to rely on support people in your life to help you cope, as well as have clarity about where to expend energy.

7/20/18

It was uncomfortable seeing Trump and Putin meet and the aftermath of it all. It's difficult when you realize that we (the U.S.) sent a rank amateur to participate in this meeting. It's like the old checkers/chess comparison, and our guy can barely play checkers.

7/19/18

I have had to do a little moving of furniture lately and shuffle a few things around. Instead of going for one of the big name companies, a friend of a friend has a company that moves furniture and will do things like a dump run. Not only does the little guy try harder, he many times charges less too. As a small business I like supporting other small businesses.

7/18/18

We have a cooler day today in Seattle. It's a nice change to get a little reprieve.

7/17/18

I took a couple Tuesdays off this month. It breaks up the week nicely. Mid-week days off allow you to get other things done.

7/16/18

I was going to take a spur of the moment trip to Portland to see a concert this past weekend. But the venue doesn't have A/C and the temps. in Portland were in the mid to upper 90s. 20 years ago I probably would have done it. Not anymore.

7/15/18

I was walking to the store a few days ago and I walked by a woman who was yelling and screaming and hollering. At first I couldn't figure out why she was so upset. Then it became clear. Another woman had stolen her phone and drug money, and she was starting to get sick from opiate withdrawal. Thank God I have never experienced this. But in watching people in the neighborhood who are going through it, it's terrible. Seattle has several large methadone clinics, which is great. But similar to the crisis of homelessness, there are rules in treatment programs, as there are rules at shelters. And some people would rather roll the dice in doing things on their own, versus give up some freedom for the security of having a place to stay, or not having to worry if they are going to go through opiate withdrawal. Seeing people go through opiate withdrawal on the streets makes me think I would follow shelter rules and go to a clinic for drug treatment. But who knows.

7/14/18

One of my new hobbies is bee watching. I am no expert in bees at this point. What drew me to this activity was noticing that there were many different types of bees. Another aspect of bee watching relates to their importance in the process of the planet being habitable through their role in the transfer of pollen from one plant to another to reproduce.

7/13/18

Living or have a close association with a person who has a mental illness can be stressful. Sometimes they may be more stable. Other times more erratic. They may have many health care appointments and need assistance getting to them. Often times people with chronic illnesses can be very demanding of you and your time if you are their partner, or close friend. The important thing to remember is that it is OK to take a break and take care of yourself. If you are committed to be there for the person in the long-term, you need to take care of yourself or you'll never last.

7/12/18

The US government requires that I bid to keep my contract with them every three years. The cycle is

ending, and it is time to bid again for the next three fiscal years. It's always stressful bidding and waiting to see whether things will continue or if I will need to make a radical shift in what I do for work. I will know by the end of August.

7/11/18

Free Slurpees at 7-11. Need I say more!

7/10/18

Do you have PTSD? Are you easily triggered by certain things? There generally are two strategies employed to address this. First is to identify what triggers you and do your best to not expose yourself to them. The second is to do what is called exposure therapy, and do the opposite, which is to purposefully expose yourself to your triggers in a safe way to gradually desensitize yourself to the triggers. Depending on the intensity and severity of your PTSD symptoms, this process can be relatively quick to address. However, if the trauma experienced has been severe, or persisted over a significant period of time, it may take a while to address the impact it has had on you. Most people should consider getting at least some brief therapy from a qualified mental health provider to accomplish this.

7/9/18

Last week we had the last day of group for teens. After doing this type of group for over 20 years, it was bittersweet. Perhaps the numbers will increase again to the point of making a group viable to run again. But there may have been enough of a shift that it isn't practical anymore. I will miss doing group therapy with kids.

7/8/18

It's now after the 4th of July. Summer officially begins in Seattle. Warmer weather and less rain. At least until late September.

7/7/18

There is a test that measures whether a person tends to make better choices over time as they take in more information. It involves assessing whether the person gathers and uses information and alters their choices as a result of the additional information they have. This dynamic has a big impact on how well people problem solve in their day to day life. If you are a good problem solver you probably pay attention to details and adjust your decisions based on new information that you take in. If you struggle to make constructive decisions, perhaps you react with your heart more than your head, or it is difficult to figure out how to use new information when making decisions. This skill (problem solving) is a very important skill. If you struggle in this area, consider getting a "how to" book on how to solve problems and make better decisions, or get some therapy focusing on this specific issue.

7/6/18

Think about something fun you did recently. What about the activity made it fun? Are you involved in other activities that have a similar component to them? If you like team sports for example, is it only basketball? Or do you like football as well? I am a proponent of breaking things down and doing more of what brings you joy and is meaningful, and doing less of things that have a negative impact on you. Without understanding what has a positive impact on you and your life, it is hard to do more of it.

7/5/18

An assignment I ask people to complete in therapy consists of breaking down things they like about themselves. It has three categories. The first is their "talents". The second is their "internal qualities". And finally, the third area is about their "physical appearance". Most people can do two out of three fairly easily. And almost universally one of the three is difficult. Try doing this and see whether you can list at least three things in each area that make you a great person. I hope it's easy for you, but for many it isn't.

7/4/18

Happy 242nd Birthday to the U.S. We are going through some strange times these days. Hopefully this wonderful experiment in representative government will continue.

7/3/18

I got a new phone with a new carrier. One of the perks of getting older will be that in 6 months they will drop my bill by approximately 40% because I turn 55. I am officially 54 and a half today.

7/2/18

A new month brings new goals. I have been avoiding simple carbs for several months again. I feel better when I don't eat things made of processed sugar or white flour in particular. The next step is to work on cutting out artificially sweetened sodas. That's going to be tougher for me.

7/1/18

One of the biggest lessons of the present time is that voting does matter. I don't think the impact of an election has had this level of impact that the 2016 results have in my lifetime. If you think that expressing your opinion doesn't matter, or that your vote doesn't make a difference, think again.