

# November 2017 - Thoughts For the Day

11/30/17

Another powerful person is ousted for sexual harassment on the job. It's interesting that an issue can be ignored for a long time and then suddenly things reach critical mass and there is no longer any tolerance for it anymore. It's refreshing that people (mostly women) will begin to feel safer on the job as a result of this shift.

11/29/17

I had a turkey sandwich yesterday with stuffing and cranberry sauce on it. I think I am done with turkey until Christmas.

11/28/17

We talked about the pros and cons of pornography in group tonight. It's always interesting to discuss an issue when there is a perceived side of an issue people believe they should take. Trying to get people to talk about the positive side of pornography is interesting.

The pros discussed were things like: "You can always have it your way", "There's no risk of rejection", "You can fantasize about things you might never do in real life", "It's not cheating, but something different", "It can give you and your partner ideas about new things to try", and "It's a form of sex education."

The cons to porn included: "Most people don't look like that in real life", "Many things people do in porn are things people don't like in real life". "It treats people like things not people", "Many people in porn wouldn't want to be in porn if they were given a real choice", "It can cause relationship problems", "Sometimes people get addicted to it", and "You can do things (get certain kinds of porn) that are illegal."

11/27/17

Back to work after a long weekend. There always seems to be a lot to catch up on when you've been gone longer than usual. I did well in trying to catch up today.

11/26/17

And then there is everyone's favorite emotion that tends to paralyze people - anxiety. What helps with anxiety:

- 1) Having positive things handy that will soothe you in the moment
- 2) Having people who are kind around you, and have them reassure you that everything will be OK
- 3) Knowing your triggers and do your best to limit exposure to them.
- 4) Do stress inoculating activities when you aren't overwhelmed so you are better prepared if anxiety arises.

Additionally:

Some types of blood pressure meds in low doses are also great anti-anxiety antidotes for people. One of the things they do is short-circuit the anxiety loop. So even if a person gets triggered their blood pressure won't rise as much, they tend to get fewer racing thoughts, they tend to sweat and shake less. And guess what? When your body doesn't reinforce the anxiety response people calm down faster.

11/25/17

Speaking of feeling stuck, one of the difficult parts of depression is that it can immobilize people. One of the better antidotes for depression is to get people doing vs. thinking and feeling. Many times people will stay stuck in their rut looking for the perfect solution, when there is no perfect solution and/or their depression is blinding them. So the next time you see someone depressed and stuck, offer to DO something with them if you want to help. You could be part of helping them to get back on track and moving forward.

11/24/17

Not going to talk about turkey sandwiches today... Even though I just did. Anyway...

I was talking to a person and they were saying that everyone in the universe was telling them to break up with their partner because it was no good for them to stay together. As the person's therapist, I was one of the few people who asked why the relationship was so important. I was given 4 reasons why this person didn't want to end the relationship. And I have to say that they seemed perfectly reasonable. It's somewhat irrelevant whether I thought they were good reasons. But the person said to me that it made it easier to discuss the negative parts of the relationship once someone was willing to listen to what the good parts have been. It helped this person get unstuck and be more realistic about the relationship and consider whether the positive outweighs the negative. The person is still on the fence.

11/23/17

Thanksgiving is one of my favorite holidays because I love a good turkey dinner. Seriously, it is so satisfying. I could eat a turkey dinner 50% of the time and be happy. I love leftover turkey sandwiches. I always cook an extra big bird. Yum!

11/22/17

As we are heading into the holiday season, please try and remember to be kind to one another. In some respects it won't matter whether your kid gets that "Cabbage Patch Kid" or "Tickle Me Elmo" or whatever this year's must-have toy is. What they will remember in the long run is getting to be around their extended family and friends. They will remember the love people showed for one another. So as you think about heading out for black Friday sales, or into the mall, or wherever you go, think about that. What is the holiday season about for you? And are you modeling what you believe the season is about in your actions?

11/21/17

I remember watching Perry Mason growing up. I always liked the banter between Perry Mason and the prosecutor Hamilton Burger. Apparently Supreme Court Justice Sonya Sotomayor has that same feeling about liking both characters, and has been quoted as saying the following: "but my sympathies were not entirely monopolized by Perry Mason. I was fond of Burger, the prosecutor too. I liked that he was good loser, that he was more committed to finding the truth than to winning his case. If the defendant was truly innocent, he once explained, and the case was dismissed, then he had done his job because justice had been served."

11/20/17

Some days I get asked for my "expert" opinion and I feel like such a phony. I wonder whether I am really an expert in anything. But then I remind myself that what the person is really saying is that they value my opinion and want to know what I have to say as part of trying to figure something

out. Then I feel better, because I am an expert in what I know and believe. And generally I know the difference between what I know and what I believe, which is important. I can believe something all I want, but that doesn't make it true. And this is where science and religion tend to butt heads. Science doesn't take things on faith to be true. And faith can view science as being cold-hearted and having no soul.

11/19/17

I have a friend who was just in Prague. Listening to him talk about his trip made me want to go back to Budapest and Vienna where my father's family comes from. My mom is from North Dakota, and I am not exactly inspired to go there at the moment, given that it is winter. Perhaps around April I will feel inspired to visit my mom's home town in the northern part of the state.

11/18/17

Whether it is our current president or another person, sometimes people are tempted to diagnose the person with a mental health condition, without ever meeting the person or without having the training to do so. In my experience it's much more useful to describe behavior than slap a label on a person. I remember someone labeling a mutual acquaintance as "narcissistic". I asked the person to describe what that meant. They said the person was full of himself, bragging about how great he is, he was overly sensitive to criticism, he was a know it all, he used people for his own gain, and was elitist in who he would associate with. I told the person "Wow, now I know what you mean about this person." Labels can sometimes be a helpful short-cut in describing a person, situation or thing. But frequently the descriptors are more useful. If you are prone to use short cuts when describing people or things, try breaking it down and describing what you are referring to. People may not only understand what you are saying more clearly, but without you using an emotional label they might actually be more likely to listen to what you have to say.

11/17/17

Today is my friend Michelle's birthday. She has taught me a lot over the last 20+ years. Happy Birthday Michelle. Have a great day! And thanks for the friendship.

11/16/17

A week until it is Thanksgiving. One of the things I like doing is remembering the things I am thankful for on that day. Before you get into your Thanksgiving activities take a moment and remember the things you are grateful for in your life. Or perhaps as part of the meal ask everyone at the table to say something they are thankful for before digging in. Sometimes it is easy to lose sight of things we do have in our life.

11/15/17

My condo building didn't have an elevator working for over a month due to a freak power outage. Now that the elevator is up and running again, will I continue to take the stairs? Probably most of the time. The one time I hate the stairs is when coming home from work. I just want to unload my stuff and crash on the couch to unwind. I am glad that I don't have to climb the stairs from the garage up to my unit before I get to do that now.

11/14/17

We were talking about the history of volunteering within our family as my niece has started a year in Chicago as a volunteer with Avodah providing legal assistance to low-income people there. Another niece spent a year in Haiti volunteering at an orphanage. Both my parents volunteered for decades as we were growing up, and me and my siblings do volunteer work as well. It's nice to see some of the next generation in our family continuing the tradition.

11/13/17

Being around a person who has a thought disorder (hearing voices, paranoia, word salad in their brain, grandiosity) is somewhat unsettling at times. Hearing the person you normally know to be clear headed struggling to put together coherent sentences, making claims that are outrageous, or even turning on you because they believe you are trying to harm them can be disturbing. This is clearly a time when professional help is needed if possible. Usually it requires medication and sometimes detaining in them in a hospital until their thoughts return to their baseline level of functioning. But if the person is paranoid, any attempt to get them help can be perceived as you trying to harm them. Early intervention can be helpful in these situations, trying to avoid the person totally losing touch with reality before they receive help. If you are a friend or family member of a person who is struggling with a thought disorder, please reach out for support yourself. It can feel isolating when this occurs, and sometimes people feel ashamed of the person who has a mental illness. There is nothing to feel ashamed about, any more than if the person has a heart condition, or a broken leg.

11/12/17

Funny thing about my smart phone. I love having my music on it, but it became unmanageable because there was too much. I had probably 1000 songs on it. I have never erased all the music and started from scratch until now. I am down to ~100 songs and 12 playlists. It felt good to do that. I got rid of a ton of clutter. And if I miss something I can always take it from the hard drive and put it back on my phone again. But for now the choices are simple.

11/11/17

Next year on this day will mark the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I, which was the reason for this holiday in the first place. Let's hope we can move towards peace in that time rather than the continuation or escalation of current battles.

11/10/17

I watched the movie the House of D this week. Not a stellar movie. However, it was a movie with Robin Williams that I had never seen before from over a decade ago. He is a person I wish I had had the pleasure of meeting in person. I wouldn't have talked with him about work. He just seems like a person who I could've talked to about life with, and appreciated his quirky view of it.

11/9/17

Have you adjusted to the time change? It seems to take me the whole work week to adjust to the change. Apparently there has been research done that supports that there are more accidents after time changes. Even though it is simply an hour, it amazing how that slight adjustment can throw us off.

11/8/17

This week, without even asking for it, someone prayed for my good health and happiness. What a pleasant surprise that was having someone to go out of their way to look out for me. The next time you are feeling in a generous mood, think of someone who you like, love, or admire and send them good wishes through prayer or however you send good energy into the universe. Don't wait until they are struggling, or in poor health. Give them that extra boost when they don't need it, and perhaps they won't need them as often when they are struggling.

11/7/17

Last week I had lunch with an old friend. She is enjoying her retirement. She said it's much better than she imagined it would be. A happy and relatively stress free retirement requires financial planning. The days of working until you are 65 and being able to comfortably retire on a pension and

social security are long gone for most of us. How well have you implemented a plan to be able to retire at a reasonable age? There's no time like the present to get started.

11/6/17

Snow in Seattle in early November? That's a rarity. No major hassles from it though since it didn't really stick on the roads. I think it is an amazing sight to watch it snow. Both Friday and Sunday we got a tiny dose of it.

11/5/17

I did my monthly day of 20K+ steps yesterday. What a good feeling. I like getting it out of the way early in the month so I don't even think about it.

11/4/17

A requirement of being a mental health professional is getting continuing education every two years. Sadly some of my colleagues don't like this. I have always loved school and so the idea of getting more education and ideas on how to improve what I do is a welcome opportunity rather than a dreaded obligation.

11/3/17

Less than a week until the elections. One of the things that makes our country great is being able to vote for the people who represent us. Your candidate may not always win, but it's important to be a part of the process. You don't even have to go to the polls anymore, you can mail it in or drop it off at many different places. There is no excuse.

11/2/17

"It's not fair" A phrase that inspires a lot of emotion in people, positive and negative. Sometimes it brings out the fight in people to root or stand up for the underdog. On the other hand, it might bring out the feeling that someone who didn't get their way is just whining. Sometimes if you have unjustly lost something, and there really isn't anything to be done, you have to figure out a way accept it and move on. Other times it's worth the fight to push back. If you are emotionally caught up in whatever happened, you may not have the clearest head to make this distinction. Before tossing in the towel or gearing up to fight, it can be really helpful to consult uninvolved people who can give you realistic feedback.

11/1/17

I spent time this past weekend with my mom and both brothers. It was nice to have us all in one place at the same time. It's been awhile. I feel fortunate that everyone gets along in the family. No grievances or feuds that prevent us from getting together.