

November 2018 Thoughts for the Day

11/30/18

Beginnings and endings. They are very important parts of any process. Do you make a good first impression? Do you end things on a positive note? For many, being comfortable during beginnings and endings does not come naturally. When all else fails, try to focus on the positive. It creates a good first impression, and it's less likely that you'll burn bridges at the end of something.

11/29/18

Think of something that makes you happy. Why does it make you happy? My grandmother gave me a large Brazilian quartz crystal when she visited our family back in the 1970s. It is in my office next to my desk. That crystal is full of positive energy. I not only gain positive energy from it, but share it with clients who believe that they can gain positive energy from objects. The crystal has almost no monetary value, but the fact that my grandmother lugged it from Brazil to the U.S. for me makes it priceless. And that is why it makes me happy.

11/28/18

The concept of Free Will - that's what my mother brought up as a Thanksgiving conversation when we were recently hanging out. I would like to believe that all people have free will. She is less convinced. If we are predestined to act or be certain ways because of genetics or God's will that would be disappointing to me. But if we have the illusion of free will and we are unaware that it really isn't the case, would it really matter? We would believe we have free will.

11/27/18

My brother is in town this week for a conference. I am excited that my mom, two brothers and I will all be getting together for lunch.

11/26/18

I was recently confronted with a dilemma. I was enjoying the generosity of a person who is not a positive influence in the world. Much of his negativity was in the past, but I am not convinced that the person has completely changed his ways. I was polite in the moment while attending his event, but have decided not to stay connected with this person or accept invitations from him in the future. It just doesn't feel good,

11/25/18

As the Thanksgiving weekend comes to an end in the U.S., I want to say how much I appreciate living in a first world country where I worry about things like how large a bathroom is on a plane, rather than things like IF there is clean water at all. Many of us forget how fortunate we are to have been born in a wealthy nation with many comforts that others in the world will never have. The next time you are feeling sorry for yourself, remind yourself of what life would be like in most of the world, and whether this issue is really as important as it feels in the moment.

11/24/18

I was reading this week that airlines are not only shrinking the size of seats but also their restrooms as well. Will it take people urinating or defecating all over the bathroom or in their seats before this trend ends. I already pay more for a reasonably sized seat (given my size). Can I pay extra to have a plane with a human-sized bathroom? I would totally do that.

11/23/18

Black Friday - a day when American's gorge on spending. I don't buy a single present on this day. I refuse to be part of the hordes of sheep trying to buy as many things as possible. I was raised to value experiences over things. And the experience does not have to be a fancy vacation in some exotic location to make you happy. My mom reminded me yesterday that being in the company of people you love/like and having a good time is what life is about.

11/22/18

I went to a restaurant with family that is notorious for good food but bad service. My mom saw my aggravation rise as the service was no better than before. She reminded me that we weren't in any rush, and to enjoy the company in the meantime. What would we all do without wise mothers?

11/21/18

I love watching the judge shows. One of the things that comes up over and over with plaintiffs is the feeling that if something bad happens, someone should pay for the discomfort that they experienced. What I love about the judge shows are their reminders to people that unless a person or business is negligent, they aren't automatically responsible for your negative experience. And even if they are found responsible, they may only be on the hook for medical bills. Going through an experience that causes harm does not necessarily entitle one to additional compensation for pain and suffering. Life is full of positive experiences as well as disappointments, and sometimes that's just life. It's no person's fault.

11/20/18

If you take medication(s) to help you manage your mood, during this time of year it is especially important to consistently take them. We all get more stressed around the holidays and the additional help that medication(s) can provide will make getting through the next couple months much easier. Now is the time to be vigilant regarding medications, especially one's anti-depressant.

11/19/18

The holiday season is rapidly approaching. This is a joyous time for many, but it also seems to create stress as well. This is the time of the year to practice and use stress management skills. Feel inadequately prepared? Now is the time to learn some. If nothing else, remember to take time to breathe. Focused breathing helps calm the body and mind. We all respond differently to each of our 5 senses. Some can be more soothing than others. Many people have music that calms them. Make sure those songs are on a playlist. Touch can be helpful too. Do you have people you can hug and be hugged by? Hugs can be quite comforting. Taste and smell are also powerful. Many people have comfort foods. In moderation, comfort foods are great. Smells are similar, but have no calories. Scents and oils are great. I am a fan of citrus scents. They bring back fond memories of childhood for me. And finally, we all do better when well-rested. Make sure you get enough sleep, so you aren't walking around sleep-deprived.

11/18/18

Feeling guilty for something you have done? Confession is good for the soul. However, brace yourself for consequences. Unburdening oneself may make you feel better inside, but friends, family or a system (such as the legal system or CPS) may not feel so good about your admission. It's worth weighing the pros and cons and then proceeding. Consulting a trusted person such as a religious person in your life may help. A therapist may be useful to consult as well. However most therapists are mandated reporters which would mean if it is about child abuse they would have to report it. Walking around with guilt is difficult. Not dealing with a wrong one has done may be worse. If you aren't ready to make a more public admission, perhaps an act, or several acts of atonement may help. Putting good out into the universe without expecting recognition may be a way to balance the scales for yourself. Sometimes there is no easy answer in this situation. But letting something eat you up inside may be more destructive than you realize.

11/17/18

In the upcoming week I am going to 9 live music shows in 7 days. I can't wait. Tonight is the first show... I hope I make it to all of them.

11/16/18

Less than a week until Thanksgiving in the U.S. I am not sure what I am doing. Probably a small family get together.

11/15/18

I had a lull recently when it came to clients trying to get relief from the requirement to register and requesting their records be sealed. However there has been a recent uptick in people petitioning the

court. They generally need a follow up letter from me. The upside for me is that I get to see people I haven't seen for years again. This week I had the pleasure of checking in with three young men. And there are a few more moving forward in the process.

11/14/18

I was telling a colleague I put myself on a behavior mod. star chart recently to increase my consistency in being more physically healthy. She looked kind of funny when I said this. But when you think about it, Starbucks lets you earn stars toward free product and people focus on that. Other businesses have programs to reward repeat customers. Try creating a star chart for a behavior you want to change. Are you motivated by visual reminders and rewards for engaging in a desired behavior? I know I am.

11/13/18

There is a big change in the weather in Seattle in late August - early September. There is another change right around this time. It actually gets REALLY cold at night. I have noticed that I crave soup for lunch every day when this change occurs. The local co-op grocery store has the best soups, and I have been going there every day to get my lunch. It warms your core eating soup.

11/12/18

Veteran's Day - I am not sure I had a great appreciation for people who have served our country in spite of my father being in the Air Force. Over the last 5 years I have provided counseling to many vets who have used sex as a coping mechanism and wound up in trouble as a result. Separating these men from their most recent crimes, most of them have been decent, hard-working, law-abiding men. I admire their desire to serve our country. I am not sure anyone really knows what they are signing up for when they join the service. But in spite of many of them having dishonorable or other than honorable discharges, they still have a lot of pride for serving the country.

11/11/18

Next week I will have someone to help keep the office organized and running smoothly again. It's been about 8 months. Holy Cow I am looking forward to it. I can focus again on therapy, supervising others, and running the business again.

11/10/18

I have a client with OCD who said the book Brain Lock changed his life. Much of cognitive behavioral therapy is very similar. People may come along and use different words or terms to describe the process of something to use to intervene for a mental health condition. But the fundamentals are all very similar most of the time. The steps and strategies in the book worked for him. They may not work for everyone. But if you are struggling, and don't want to go to therapy, many self help books can provide some assistance or relief.

11/9/18

Bibliotherapy - the use of books in therapy. It's interesting when instead of the therapist recommending a book to a client, the client recommends a book to the therapist. I have clients who recommend books that really changed their thinking, or changed their lives. Sometimes I read the entire book, sometimes I skim through it. Other times I will read on-line reviews of the book. If something touches a person and they are in our care, it's reasonable to try and check it out to some degree. If they were moved by War and Peace" I probably won't be reading it any time soon. Moby Dick was something I did read. I liked the idea of Ahab's monomania. There are many people who seek therapy and one of their issues could be a monomania - being very focused on one subject or thing. Whether clients, or people in my day to day life, I like extreme collectors. Although it can be pathological, it also can be something very interesting to the person, and they can't get enough. I enjoy being around people with a passion.

11/8/18

As important as a good pair of shoes can be, a good bed is probably equally important. Most of us spend around 1/3rd of our lives sleeping. Anything to make one third of our life more comfortable is an important thing to invest in.

11/7/18

Some days are tougher than others. When you're in the midst of it all, sometimes it is difficult to remember that things will improve. One of my strategies is to remind myself that most of the time, a good night's sleep usually helps. Ever go to bed tired and grumpy and wake up in a much better mood? Sometimes the body and mind just need some down time. Sleep is under-rated.

11/6/18

One of my philosophies of relationships is that every day is a choice. I can choose to stay in it or not. After 20 years that is over 7000 days of choosing to be in the same relationship. Most days the choice is easy. Some days it is incredibly difficult. But we always have choices.

11/5/18

I am still watching the TV show 90 Day Fiance. It really shows that relationships take time. You can only find out so much from a person in a short 90 days. 20 years into my own relationship, I still learn new things about my relationship and myself all the time. I can't imagine deciding to marry someone and all that in 90 days. Most of us are looking for love and affiliation. By taking time you really get to know someone, and that process is important and exciting in and of itself.

11/4/18

Some days making changes feels overwhelming. It's worth remembering that small changes can lead to big improvements. You don't have to tackle an entire problem all at once. Pick one small manageable thing to work on, and work on that only. Don't overdo it. Just work on making that one thing automatic, so it isn't even something you have to think about. For me, I always walk to the store every morning to buy my newspaper instead of having it delivered. That guarantees that I will do at least a half mile of walking every morning.

11/3/18

Speaking of movement and walking... Be sure to take care of your feet. Investing in a good pair of shoes is very important. Your feet support you all day and take a pounding, so please support them in return. It's worth buying well made shoes.

11/2/18

The connection between mind and body is powerful. One of the best natural antidepressants is exercise and movement. If you are depressed and reluctant to take medication, consider increasing your level of physical activity. Even if it's 5-10 minutes of walking a couple times a day. Or parking a little further out at the store and walking those extra steps. It doesn't take much to start making a difference.

11/1/18

Last month I went to our national professional conference in Vancouver. We had beautiful weather, and the conference was great too. Spending time with colleagues is interesting and fun. The conference can be overwhelming with well over a 1000 people participating. I don't go every year, but when it is held so close to home, it's hard to resist.