

December 2018 Thoughts for the Day

12/31/18

Goodbye 2018. I got a lot of what I wanted this year, but there was a lot of chaos and uncertainty too. Probably the best thing I did for myself was to let go of some "responsibilities". Other people stepped in and picked up where I left off. It doesn't matter whether they do it better, worse, different, or the same as I did. The nice part is letting go and knowing that that is OK.

12/30/18

Voila! Today is a better day. Riding out the storm almost always is a good plan. Don't make big plans or changes in the midst of the storm unless you are required to do so. There is almost nothing so pressing that it can't wait.

12/29/18

Today was kind of a grumpy day. One of those waking up on the wrong side of the bed kind of things. But I know a good night's sleep tonight and tomorrow will be better.

12/28/18

The end of a short week. I like three day work weeks. Although I think I would get bored if that was the norm. I am taking next week off, and then back to the regular schedule.

12/27/18

I'm not a fan of new year's resolutions. People tend to change when the unpleasant feeling of continuing down a certain path is worse than the unpleasant feelings regarding change. Arbitrarily changing on January 1st may work for some. But we all have to decide when we are tired of old habits and want to create new ones. People with goals are more successful (and generally happier) than those without. Rather than a new year's resolution, how about setting a few goals?

12/26/18

Mental health therapy is interesting as a provider. There are therapists who I really like as people, but when I have referred someone to them for therapy, the client said it wasn't a good fit. I never get over this weird dynamic. How can someone be so different in the therapy room?

12/25/18

What is your favorite Christmas ritual? I don't really have many. I collect wishbones, which means I tend to debone the remaining turkey after the meal.

12/24/18

Christmas eve. I hope people's temporary insanity brought on by the holidays will end soon.

12/23/18

I have a bad case of carpal tunnel syndrome. I am getting surgery for it in February. It's humbling when one of your hands doesn't work right. The good news is that the current way they do surgery has a quick recovery time and has an amazing success rate (over 90%).

12/22/18

I get worried when politicians repeatedly use the threat of shutting down the national government to get their way. Discuss and negotiate! If you have to resort to ultimatums, it is a sign that there are bigger problems. We are in the third shutdown in the U.S. in 2018. How about learning how to play well with others?

12/21/18

Today was one of those days where things didn't go exactly as planned or scheduled. But for the most part it worked out OK. Some people didn't show up. Others showed up early, some late. You can tell we are in the midst of the holiday season because people are distracted.

12/20/18

We had a holiday meal during group tonight. Whether people have places to go for the holidays, or not, it was nice to offer people the opportunity to have a holiday meal with others.

12/19/18

A day or two ago I was up at 430a.m. Outside my window I watched the traffic. Normally I am not even awake at this hour. But I recently was. It is amazing to me how many people were on the bus on their way to work, home or somewhere. I am sure I could adjust to a schedule that required me to be out the door and on my way to work by 430, but it certainly would not be my preference.

12/18/17

It's been super rainy and windy recently. Although the Seattle area doesn't have more traditional seasons, this is current weather is common during the winter here. I love wind and rain. It's very refreshing.

12/17/18

There are many people who have become armchair psychiatrists and psychologists. People are tossing around diagnoses of public figures without A) actually knowing the person and B) without having any training in the diagnosis of a mental health disorder. I find it more effective to describe the behaviors and statements rather than using the name of a diagnosis. This is not only because most people aren't trained to diagnose, but because describing a cluster of behaviors is more useful than tossing around a label. I recommend this because two people with the same diagnosis can present very differently. For example, with depression instead of saying the person is depressed, I would say things like the person is struggling to meet their daily responsibilities, they have had a major disruption in their sleep pattern, they express overwhelming feelings of sadness, and they present as being irritable. These are much more useful. Because a different person who is depressed could be described and isolated, withdrawn, unusually quiet, and expressing feelings that their life isn't worth living. The ways to help each of these people would be different, yet they both might be viewed as "depressed".

12/16/18

Pete Davidson appears to be struggling with his mental health issues, and posting publicly about it. People living with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) really struggle within themselves. They pull people close then push them away. They tend to manage stress poorly, using destructive methods to cope. One of the hardest parts of this dynamic for many people with BPD is the feeling that they want to die. Most actually don't. But many friends and family grow tired of people with BPD because of the statements made about wanting to end their lives. People get compassion fatigue. People feel hopeless and powerless in dealing with those statements made by the person with BPD. It's important not to challenge a person with BPD regarding their intentions to kill themselves. They may be in a space where they feel the need to prove that they are serious and inadvertently actually complete the suicide process. Redirect a suicidal person with BPD to their professional support people and/or the crisis hotline in your area. Most people are not prepared to deal with a person with BPD who is expressing suicidal ideation.

12/15/18

A theme for last week in many parts of my life was about one's legacy. Have you thought about how you want to be remembered? Do you live your life in a way that is consistent with this? If not, what would you need to do differently to increase the chances that your legacy will indeed match what you hope it will be?

12/14/18

Today I host a monthly consultation group at my office. I really enjoy and respect my colleagues and their opinions. It makes work more rewarding.

12/13/18

Earlier in the week I gave some unsolicited feedback. There are days when I think "Why did I do that?" I guess because I had an opinion that I wanted to express. That probably isn't a good enough reason to offer one's opinion. Hopefully it will be accepted with the spirit intended which is to improve things.

12/12/18

Today is my brother's birthday. I hope he has a happy birthday.

12/11/18

Today is the first day of two that George Clinton and Parliament / Funkadelic shows in Seattle. I hope I make both, but I should make at least one of the shows.

12/10/18

Those of you who know me, know my love of the musician/artist known as Prince and his work. He wrote the song "Manic Monday" for The Bangles. Today I am feeling that song. Wishing it was Sunday, " 'cuz that's my funday." Once I am work, things are great. It's getting up Monday morning and getting out the door that is difficult.

12/9/18

Behavior change can be difficult. There are many strategies to impact one's behaviors, but one that seems to be universally helpful is having support. Some people are embarrassed talking to another about their personal struggle. If you have a real life support person it really helps. Some people can talk to their friends. Other people rely on 12-Step programs because these are people they don't have to face in day to day life. If that seems like it is too anxiety provoking, many people choose on-line forums for support. This is a more anonymous way to gain support. But in the end it's the support that we all need as we work on our issues. Consider who you can rely on as you embark on changing your life. Ideally it helps to have more than one option in case one isn't available.

12/8/18

As the new year rapidly approaches many people think about making New Year's resolutions. Many people consider things they want to stop doing. I would encourage you to think about something you want to increase in the new year. Rather than stopping your smoking, how about increasing your gum chewing. This may sound like a goofy way to approach things. But if gum chewing gives your mouth something to do instead of smoking, increasing the amount of time doing this behavior may distract you from smoking. And rather than feeling deprived from smoking you have green-lighted yourself to increase a different behavior.

12/7/18

At work I assist many men who have high sex drives. One of the interesting things that is offered for consideration is the use of an SSRI anti-depressant. This is because many help with compulsive behaviors. But the other part is that what many consider a negative side effect (lowering their libido) can be a benefit for a person who has a high sex drive and/or someone compulsively using sex as a coping mechanism. This option isn't for everyone. And if you are considering this, you have to be careful if you choose to come off of the SSRI. This is because many people believe that the medication hasn't really had that much of an effect. However, coming off of it, they have a rebound effect when it comes to their sexual behavior. And what was a more manageable issues becomes overwhelming. So. be careful if you are considering using an SSRI as part of helping yourself manage compulsive sexual behavior. And almost be more careful if you are on an SSRI and decide to stop.

12/6//18

This weekend there is a marathon of the TV show "Ru Paul's Drag Race" on TV. Although I have been to drag shows, I don't have much knowledge about what it takes behind the scenes for a person to create the illusion of being the opposite gender. I like shows that explain how things work. I am impressed at the work it takes to do it well. It reminds me of the Dolly Parton quote, "It costs a lot of money to look this cheap!" While some drag queens are trying to truly pass as female many create a

caricature of what it means to look female. And that's when Dolly's quote seems to apply. Anyway, I have a lot of respect for how much time and effort the queens put into their transformations.

12/5/18

Midweek slump day. Sometimes "hump" day doesn't feel like you are halfway to the weekend. What can you do to put a little pep in your step to make it through the end of your week? I get cracking on smaller tasks on my to-do list. That way as I cross them off the list it feels like I am accomplishing something and getting some forward momentum.

12/4/18

I was watching a judge show where two people who had run against each other for a school board position in Mississippi claimed the other did damage to the other (ruining campaign signs, and doing doughnuts in the other's yard). The primary platform issue was about sex education. The abstinence-only promoting candidate was for a process where they pass around a sugar cookie in class and then ask if anyone will eat it. Of course no one does, and the analogy the teacher uses is "No one wants a dirty cookie." It's surprising in this day and age that that passes for sex education. In addition to creating shame about sex because it's "dirty", it seems the even more problematic aspect is that it is focusing on the "dirty cookie". Why is it that it would make the girl dirty, but there is no focus on males and what it makes them? Fortunately the person who promotes accurate sex education won. Maybe that will help decrease the high levels of STIs and teen pregnancies they are dealing with.

12/3/18

Living one's life in the present. How often do you live this way? When you look back on your life, will you be able to do so without many regrets? How meaningful does your life feel? If you have many regrets, start living your life in ways that change this. You don't have to do something on the magnitude of Bill and Melinda Gates to have a meaningful life. For example, I used to collect and throw away garbage during my daily walk. It made my neighborhood look better. I always try to do something meaningful each and every day. This is not an overwhelming task when you define it in ways that make this goal manageable.

12/2/18

As you are out and about this month, remember what the spirit of the holiday season is about. It's about kindness, caring, and treating each other well. This is true whether you celebrate Christmas, Winter Solstice, Hanukkah, another holiday, or none at all. And if you do nothing else, have a little extra patience with others, even if they don't show you any in return. It costs you nothing.

12/1/18

It's World AIDS Day. In spite of many things improving when it comes to preventing and treating people with HIV, it is still an issue. If you are HIV- and engaging in higher-risk sexual behavior, consider taking PREP which may reduce your chances of contracting HIV. This is one of the advances that is a positive step towards reducing the number of new cases of HIV.