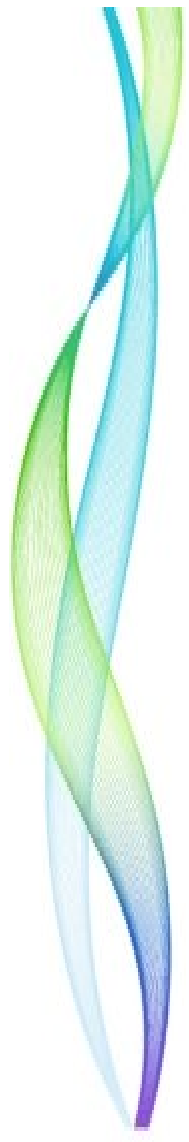


Think Tank August 2015

Focus: How Routine Can Create Calm



Now that summer break is winding down - vacations are over and school's around the corner, it's time to get back to our regular routine. But the word *routine* means different things to different people. Some associate it with reliability and reassurance, while others think of routines as dull, controlling or restrictive. Depending on your personality type and experience, routine can either be a welcomed, familiar friend or, the equivalent of a really annoying relative; to be tolerated in very small doses. In truth, routine doesn't have to rule your life; it can simply be used as an effective tool to help minimize chaos, create more calm and make daily living more pleasurable. Here are a few ideas to consider incorporating into your routine:

Whether you're single, in a committed relationship and/or a parent, **waking up at the same time every day**, preferably on the early side, creates a wonderful element of sameness, allowing you to schedule (or not) the things you want to accomplish before the rest of the world vies for your attention. If you exercise and/or meditate (and we hope you do), this is the perfect time to do it -after 9 a.m., life and work will afford you all kinds of excuses to blow them off.

Planned meals and mealtimes give you something healthy and delicious to look forward to and support better nutritional choices while discouraging desperate, last minute trips through the drive-through. And while you're at it, calendar in a five-minute break after meals to relax and contemplate your next activity (P.S. your digestive tract will also thank you).

After-work outdoor activities can also be scheduled to encourage fitness and fulfilling, social connections rather than isolated, negative habits such as drinking alcohol to relieve stress, opening up a bag of chips to ward off hunger and sitting at your computer for endless hours until it's time for bed.



For parents, especially those with children who struggle getting out the door, routines can be a lifesaver. Use **visual cues**, whether in the form of instruction cards with pictures (waking up, brushing teeth, getting dressed) or, for the more tech savvy, smart phone apps such as **brili** (visual scheduling designed specifically for children).

Finally, think about bedtime routines. Research has shown that a consistent routine leading up to nighty-night improves the chances for **longer, more restful sleep**. Cut out alcohol and stimulants such as caffeine and exercise several hours before shut-eye. Turn off electronics. Dim lights and dress in comfy, natural fabric clothing. Then, before you drift off into slumberland, ponder just for a moment the positive aspects of today. Keep calm and schedule on.

Self Care Strategies: Don't forget to Say "No"

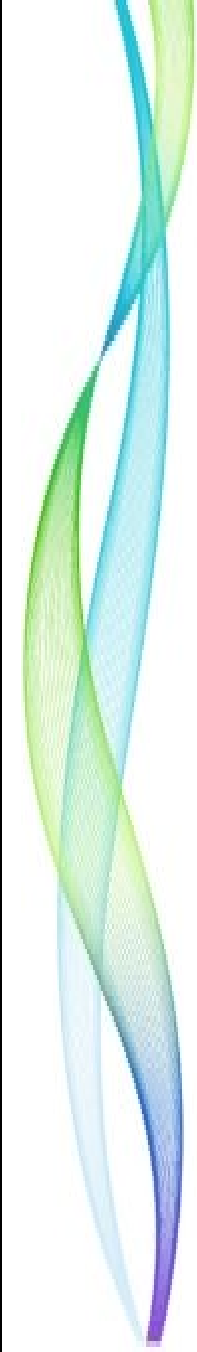
Now that fall is nearly here, school, an increased workload, holidays and family obligations are not far behind. But how are *your* needs factored into that busy mix? While you may want to give everyone 110 percent, simple math tells us that isn't possible. Determine your top three priorities and spend the majority of your efforts on those things. Not only is it *okay* to say "no" to lesser priorities, it will also help prevent burnout and resentment from saying "yes" on one-too-many occasions. Remember, no one appreciates a grumpy volunteer.

Reconnect: Is Your Relationship a Rock, Pebble or Sand?

Have you heard the well-circulated story on the Internet about the professor who filled a glass jar with rocks, then pebbles, and finally, sand, to teach his students about priorities and time management? The idea behind it, is that rocks represent what means the most to us; our core values. Pebbles are those things that still matter, but are slightly less important, and sand fills in the remaining gaps. In our busy lives, it's easy to forget what *should* come first. We turn jobs (or children's daily needs, or guilt-ridden tasks) into rocks, and in the process, relegate our partner to lowly *sand*. Then, we wonder why the relationship suffers. If you're in a relationship, how can you be sure your partner gets *rock* (star) status?

Bibliotherapy: *Department of Speculation* by Jenny Offill

Jenny Offill's second novel charts the course of a marriage from its breathless beginnings to mid-life reality in an entirely unexpected



way; through small snippets of prose, weaving in and out of the relationship and the inane; including life in Brooklyn, the complications of new parenthood and inevitable career demands. Offill is one of "those writers" so adept at storytelling and everyday observation that at times, you'll think you're simply reading her diary. In the end, however, she delivers a tale that doesn't disappoint. Selected as one of *The New York Times* Book Review's 10 Best Books of 2014.

Time-Out: Family Movie Night

It's the end of the summer and if you're like most parents and caregivers, you are likely searching for anything to fill the time before school starts. A great way to spend time together as a family (and stay out of the heat!) is to organize a family movie night. Because movies have the ability to persuade and teach our children, take a few extra minutes to select a movie that your family will enjoy and can serve to teach a valuable lesson at the same time. Search for movies with themes like building character, grit, honest, friendship, self-love, and acceptance. A few that we like include *Nanny McPhee* (teaching kindness, obedience and honesty), *The Sand Lot* (teaching sportsmanship, friendship and loyalty) *The Goonies* (teaching friendship, compassion and inner conviction). Check out other excellent selections at <http://afineparent.com/building-character/best-family-movies.html>.

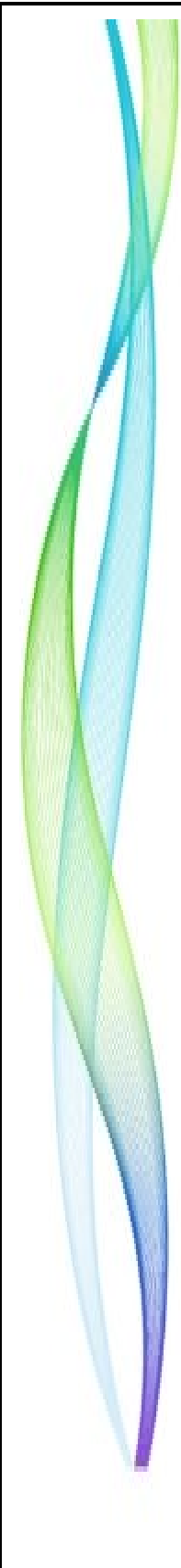
After the movie is over, take a few minutes to talk with your children about the important messages of the film. If you think they missed the boat on the big ideas, share with them what you took away from watching. Make it a practice to focus on important messages as a family and they will watch movies in a different way the next time you all sit down together for a family movie night.

Here's another interesting link that explains why storytelling with children works very well as a teaching tool: www.spring.org.uk/2012/01/why-stories-sell-transportation-leads-to-persuasion.php.

For more insight on how these suggestions can relate specifically to your family, please contact [Laura Elpers](#) to schedule a parent coaching session.

Take Two: McFarland, USA

McFarland, USA is the true story of the 1987 McFarland, California high school cross-country team that prevailed against the odds in a small, migrant farming community. The team, led by down-on-his-



luck Coach White (Kevin Costner), has both much to learn and much to teach. It's a wonderful movie for all ages, and a perfect fit for a family movie night.

Insights Happenings:

Book Launch *Ready to Talk: A Companion Guide to Psychotherapy* by Insights Founder/CEO Mary Sanger, LPC-S, LMFT-S, LCDC, *Marriage & Family Therapist*

Have you ever wondered how therapy really works? Would you like to enhance your weekly sessions? Have you tried therapy in the past but were dissatisfied with the results? In straightforward language and an easy-to-read format, Sanger explains how to get the most out of the therapeutic process, teaching us that essentially, each of us is the architect of our own story.

Readers will learn how to challenge current beliefs that are no longer serving them well, recognize unhelpful thought patterns and self-defeating behaviors, manage emotions so that relationships are more enjoyable and understand how others' beliefs and emotions don't have to control their lives. It's an indispensable book for those seeking a more pleasurable, less painful and authentic daily life. You can order your copy from www.amazon.com

Mindful Moms Group Join us weekly for an ongoing group designed for moms who are looking for help and understanding in navigating life challenges with their kids. This group is designed for moms with kids who are tween, teens, young adults, and boomerangs. Mindful Moms Group offers moms support, therapy, and education as well as connections, parenting tools and stress reduction techniques. The cost is \$30 a week, registration is not required. For more information email thinktank@insightstherapy.com or call (214) 706-0508.

Yoga We believe that healthy living requires an holistic approach - mind, body and spirit. We don't just treat symptoms or isolated causes. We work with you as a whole person to experience greater fulfillment and less anxiety in your life. Every 4th Saturday of the month, Insights will host a Yin Yoga class. Yoga for your mind -it calms, it stretches, it builds endurance. The poses in yin yoga are practiced entirely while sitting or lying on the mat, with out the use of props. This style of practice is a restorative yoga. The fee for this class is a donation and all proceeds will go to The American Heart Association. Instructor -Scott Murphy



Nourish -Insights will be starting a new mixed-gender on going group on Monday, May 11th for individuals 18 and up that struggle with eating and body image. The group will help separate food and feelings with the support of a Licensed Professional Counselor and a Registered Dietitian. The group will meet on Mondays from 6-7:30pm. For more information, call (214) 706-0508 or email thinktank@insightstherapy.com

Inner Evolution Group Coaching Inner Evolution Group Coaching is an ongoing women's group designed to enhance a women's fulfillment, harmony, and inner peace. Our mission is to empower women in their emotional and spiritual evolution through education, guidance, and support. The group will be facilitated by Amy Egan and Robin Knuuttila. To read more about this supportive and healing women's group please visit the Insights website. If you are looking for a deeper connection with yourself and other women call 214.356.7646 or email amy@innerevolutioncoaching.com to reserve your spot.

Our Time is Up: Stay tuned for our September issue...