

Kid News Today

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Journaling: What's the Point?

A lot of therapists and self-help books of every stripe recommend journaling. For a lot of people, this may sound like a lot of fluffy nonsense—like a child keeping a diary. Journals may be merely a recounting of the day's events, but journals can offer therapeutic benefits, too:

Many behavior problems, such as overeating, overspending, or other poor choices are excellent subjects for journaling. In these cases, the time of day, your emotional feeling and thoughts before, during and after the behavior, as well as what you specifically did, are the subject of the journal. Over time, you have a record of the kinds of situations that are triggers for you, the patterns of troublesome thoughts to be targeted for change. Journaling tends to have an effect on behavior: somehow knowing you're going to be writing down that third handful of potato chips tends to lessen the appeal of the potato chips. Behavior observed often is behavior changed.

Journaling can be an outlet for thoughts and feelings we can't share with people close to us. Grieving family members often want to spare one another from their own pain, for example, so separate counseling and some journaling can be a way of expressing painful thoughts and feelings. This requires, of course, that the household respect one another's privacy.

Another use of journaling is to take ideas to a deeper level. Repeatedly writing about the same problem in a disciplined way can yield deeper levels of insight and understanding. One example of this is the exercise in which you complete a specific sentence stem 10 times daily, in one sitting, for an entire week. Ex: "Something

important I learned from my parents was..." and complete the sentence. This can also work for unhappy subjects, such as, "One of my fears of growing older is..." The results can become very helpful for psychological and spiritual growth if you use the information wisely.

Journals can also be a place to keep track of creative ideas, dreams (both the ones when you're asleep and the ones when you're awake) and a place to write down things that irritate you. That may sound strange, but it may be that if you write down your aggravations and disappointments, and check the list a few days later, you may gain some insight into the degree to which small things upset you. On the other hand, a pattern may emerge – a family member or co-worker who is regularly inconsiderate—that merits attention.

Disciplined exercisers, such as runners training for races, often keep training journals that record not only the type of workout but the way the athlete felt during and afterwards. Some very serious athletes also journal important clues of possible overtraining, such as the resting heart rate being too high upon awakening, aches and pains, and loss of energy.

- Dr. Lori Puterbaugh, LMHC, LMFT

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Faith-Friendly News
You Can Use

**Sr. Flo Marino,
Administrator**

**Holy Family
Catholic School**

727-526-8194



NOVEMBER HOLIDAYS

All Saints' Day 11/1

Daylight Savings Times
Ends on 11/6

Election Day 11/8

Veterans' Day 11/11

Thanksgiving Day 11/24

1st Sunday of Advent on
November 27

November resources for parents & professionals

Are young adults hopelessly lost? In **Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood**, by Christian Smith, explores this question via over 200 interviews with young adults (18 to 23) with him and his collaborators. The effects of moral relativism, substance abuse, materialism and other phenomena of modern popular culture are explored.

I Will Come Back for You: A Family in Hiding During World War II by Marisabina Russo. Ms. Russo has produced another sensitively done children's book that is based on her family's experiences in Europe during World War II. This book tells the story of her aunt, uncle and their children, who left Nazi Germany for Italy and then suffered persecution as Jews in Italy. The book also tells of the brave Catholic Italians who helped hide as many Jews as they could from persecution and death.

Watch for the Light: this collection of daily reflections for the periods of Advent and Christmas includes work by C.S. Lewis, Thomas Merton, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Henry Nouwen, and others. For families with small children, **Advent Storybook: 24 Stories to Share Before Christmas** by Antonie Schneider, is one of many child-friendly ways to enrich this beautiful liturgical period.

HEALTH NEWS: Does the changing season seem to darken your mood? **Seasonal Affective Disorder strikes here in Florida, too.** In fact, many aspects of modern life can create the same problem, no matter what the time of year. In Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) the lack of exposure to bright natural light results in temporary brain chemistry changes that disrupt sleep and negatively affect mood, concentration, and energy. It can look and feel like any other type of depression. The cure is easy: be sure to get plenty of exposure to natural light every day. This may require changing some habits, including being outdoors (preferably with your eyes exposed to the light) during the bright time of day and using very bright lights indoors for part of each day, preferably not in the last two or three hours before bedtime. The therapeutic lights can be expensive (often well over \$150), but the sun provides the same effect for free.

Is Your Young Athlete Too Thin? Although most coaches are well aware of the risks of being underweight, the athletes themselves may be in denial about the effects of insufficient nutrition, weight loss and maintaining underweight, not only on athletic performance, but also on long-term health. Teens, of course, are notorious for being resistant to a long-term view (they seem to think their here-and-now bodies are as immortal as their souls). Signs of eating disorders, such as weight loss, sour breath or mouth sores from forced vomiting, or the use of laxatives, are danger signs. Likewise, very restrictive eating patterns, e.g., avoiding entire food groups such as grains, is a danger sign. Look for physical signs such as weight loss, cessation of menstruation, increase in arm and leg hair (a sign of dangerous weight loss and common in patients with anorexia nervosa), and complaining of always being too cold. Use of diuretics and laxatives can cause electrolyte imbalance and possible heart damage. If you suspect there is a problem with your young athlete, consult the family physician immediately!

Is Heroin Poised for a comeback? As law enforcement gains ground in cutting down on the availability of prescription pain medication for abusers, some addiction experts are concerned that we will see an increase in the demand and abuse of heroin and similar substances, which have some of the same effects. This is a dangerous drug and it also is a major product for the Taliban in Afghanistan—the people who are attacking our military and civilian personnel who are part of Operation Enduring Freedom. Street names for heroin include: dope, dragon, H, junk, skag, smack, brown, white china, Mexican mud or Mexican brown,. Parents, teachers and coaches should be aware of heroin's growing popularity as well as the tendency for young people to mix it with other drugs, such as cold medicine or amphetamines. **Bedwetting: Is My Kid Normal?**

The average child is ready to start potty training between 22 and 30 months of age, and will need help with cleanup until about age 5. While about 85% of kids are dry at night by the time they're 7, it's not unusual for kids 10 to 12 to have occasional night time accidents.

Relationship Corner: Setting Boundaries with Intrusive Relatives

The holiday season approaches: time to spend lots of time with our families. For some people, that means being burdened with intrusive, often rude and hurtful questions and comments. There are whole books of advice on how to handle these folks, but the short answer always comes down to being assertive. Assertive means different things to different people, and it can sometimes be difficult to pull off, especially when you feel under attack.

Perhaps it's easiest to figure out one or two generic responses to rudeness, rehearse them (seriously!) and be ready

to take on those rude remarks. Since we can all expect possible rude questions and comments on everything from clothes to weight to our reproductive patterns and job prospects, it can be hard to come up with one or two verbal shields to deflect the hurtful effects. Remembering that rudeness tells you about the rude person, not about you, can help.

Here are two suggestions for those times when someone with whom you'd like to have a decent relationship just can't seem to keep from saying appallingly rude things. "Oh, you'll be the (second/third/tenth) per-

son to know." This could apply to decisions about children, college, jobs, vacations, or weight gain/loss.

That first one is a little impertinent, so you might prefer: "Are you asking me about (whatever is really the topic—your reproductive prospects, your finances, etc.)?" Since everyone knows that asking directly about these things is rude, you're reflecting the inappropriate question back to the asker.

It helps to smile warmly while being assertive and using an upbeat, not angry, tone. Try it—it might be fun! - Dr. Lori Puterbaugh, LMHC, LMFT



smile warmly
while being
assertive
with family

Something to Talk About: What Not to Say

Is it hard to figure out what's rude and what's not? Here are some things that are considered rude by adults:

- Commenting on someone's weight
- Asking people how much something cost or how much money they make
- Complaining that something you've been served doesn't taste good
- Asking an adult's age
- Commenting on someone's appearance in a negative way. Example: asking someone if they did something new to their hair "on purpose."
- Saying something is stupid
- Not answering a question in a full sentence; saying "yup" or "no," without any other words, or grunting.
- Complaining about being bored when you're spending time with other people.



It can be confusing because so many young people treat one another in ways that adults think are rude but the young people don't, so this is definitely something to talk about! - Dr. Lori Puterbaugh, LMHC, LMFT

Do You Have a Humor Library?



A good laugh is therapeutic: it releases feel-good endorphins in the brain, which are both mood elevators and natural pain killers. Laughing in a good-natured (not mean laughter) way on a regular basis promotes a healthy immune system. So, how's your humor library? Do you have access to things that make you really smile—maybe laugh aloud—every day? Consider making a collection: a book of your favorite comic strip, a daily joke, favorite old movies or television shows—that can become the basis of a library of laughter. Families can work on this together: let kids contribute their favorite jokes and stories. Creative kids might enjoy making their own scrapbook of funny things. - Dr. Lori Puterbaugh, LMHC, LMFT

Certain health habits seem to be a kind of vaccine against severe emotional problems. When done regularly, a regular exercise regimen (aim for an hour of activity daily, including teens and children), sufficient sleep, daily exposure to bright light—preferably natural daylight—and proper nutrition including sufficient complex carbohydrates and Omega-3 essential fatty acids seem to be a magic combination. A person who is disciplined in including these into daily life, and has some close, healthy relationships with others, will be more resilient in the face of challenges and be better prepared to maintain a happy, healthy outlook.

Grownup Tip of the Month: Attacking OCD



OCD stands for Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. This diagnosis applies when a person is troubled by intrusive, unwanted thoughts that create great anxiety, and then the person acts (or wants to act) in ways that are not actually helpful but tend to temporarily alleviate the anxiety. While there are many types of treatment available, most effective treatments focus on a combination of stress management techniques and cognitive behavioral therapy.

The stress management techniques are used when the person is learning to not act on the obsession (the thought) by doing the action (the compulsion). Thus, if a person begins to worry about germs and has to wash his hands five times, the stress management technique would be used after the first (and only!) hand-washing as the person tried the replacement behavior. The replacement behavior might deliberately rehearsing a new thought—something no one else can see or hear but can help the person suffering from OCD begin to regain control.

OCD can be very painful, distressing and embarrassing. Sometimes people may begin to withdraw from friends and family because their behaviors (often calls rituals) take so long or draw negative comments. Telling someone to "just get over it" doesn't work any better with OCD or other anxiety disorders than it does with depression.

If OCD behaviors and the underlying worries and fears are beginning to control your life, please seek expert guidance. It is possible to be free of OCD. - Dr. Lori Puterbaugh, LMHC, LMFT