

Thoughts for Spring

It's already the end of March! 2018! It seems that one thing we can count on in life is that it moves quickly. The saying used to go that "time flies when you are having fun", but it seems to me that even through grief, depression, illness, or crisis, people are always surprised at how the weeks go by. So, given that there are very few constants that we can count on in life, if this is one of them, then the lesson of "enjoy today", "practice mindfulness", "carpe diem", "be present" - is more important than ever to really grasp, embrace, and sustain.

Today, I'm thinking about spring. It's tied for first with summer for me. It reminds me of constant change, the cycle of life, resilience for having made it through another winter (plants, animals, weeds, bugs, and humans), and it gets me excited that summer is coming as it always does. It's good to have things to look forward to.

Here at Upper Island Counselling we are grateful for how busy we have been and feel fortunate to be able to provide support to so many people as this is what we love to do. We are also grateful for the ongoing support from our 81 member companies. With April upon us, as is the national Day of Mourning on April 28th.

"Workers, families, employers, and communities come together each year at ceremonies held around the province to remember those who have lost their lives on the job and to renew our commitment to creating healthy and safe workplaces." www.worksafefbc.ca.

Leading up to and on this day we reflect on the workplace fatalities that we have responded to over the years. We think of the family members of those people and wonder how they are healing from their loss. If this day is close to home for you, we hope that you can take some time to surround yourself with your friends and family, your memories, your comforts, and other supports as needed for your journey with grief. We will continue our commitment to supporting workplace safety by supporting the mental health and wellness needs of our clients and communities. Please remember to reach out to us for help when you need to.

Kelsi Baine

Executive Director / Counsellor

How to Simplify Your Life: Part 4 of 4 – Slowing Down

Simplifying your life can be an effective way to reduce stress, improve mental health and lead a more meaningful life. In this issue of Connections we offer the fourth and final installment of our series on how to simplify your life. Here you can find 6 tips on how to slow down.

- 1) **Put your phone away.** Nothing will distract you and keep you unfocused more than checking your telephone for messages every two minutes. When working on a project, keep your phone out of your work space. When you're with friends or family, put your phone on silent and keep it tucked away somewhere.
- 2) **Work from a manageable to-do list.** Come up with a manageable to-do list and stick to it as closely as possible. What do you hope to accomplish by the end of the day or week? It might even be helpful to come up with more substantial lists of long-term goals and plans, to help prioritize accomplishments.
- 3) **Simplify your digital clutter.** Do a massive purge of messages, documents and other things that are cluttering up your computer and your inbox. Start keeping things simple and maintain a regular purging regime. If you spend more hours than you'd like online, set a time-limit and stick to it.
- 4) **Do one thing at a time.** Multi-tasking should be avoided, whenever possible. It is a myth that a person can focus on more than one thing at a time and do so well. While sometimes you have to, or want to, one thing at a time is a good ideal.
- 5) **Leave your work at work.** Don't let the complication of your work day mess up your after work life. Don't bring any work back to the house to complete later. If you're feeling stressed out after a work day, do something relaxing the minute you get home.
- 6) **Meditate for 10 - 20 minutes each day.** It's just a few minutes, but it can help to make all the difference in your stress levels and your ability to remain calm and focused. Take the small step of spending quiet time, just sitting, in a comfortable space. Relax your body, focus on your breath, and let your mind calm itself.

Adapted from wikiHow: <http://www.wikihow.com/Simplify-Your-Life>

Spring Cleaning for Your Mental Health

Soon we will smell newly bloomed tulips, cut the grass, clean out our closets of old winter clothes, and begin our other pre-summer routines. Springtime is full of fresh starts and new beginnings, a time of renewal. So what better time than spring to give a little attention to renewing our mental health?

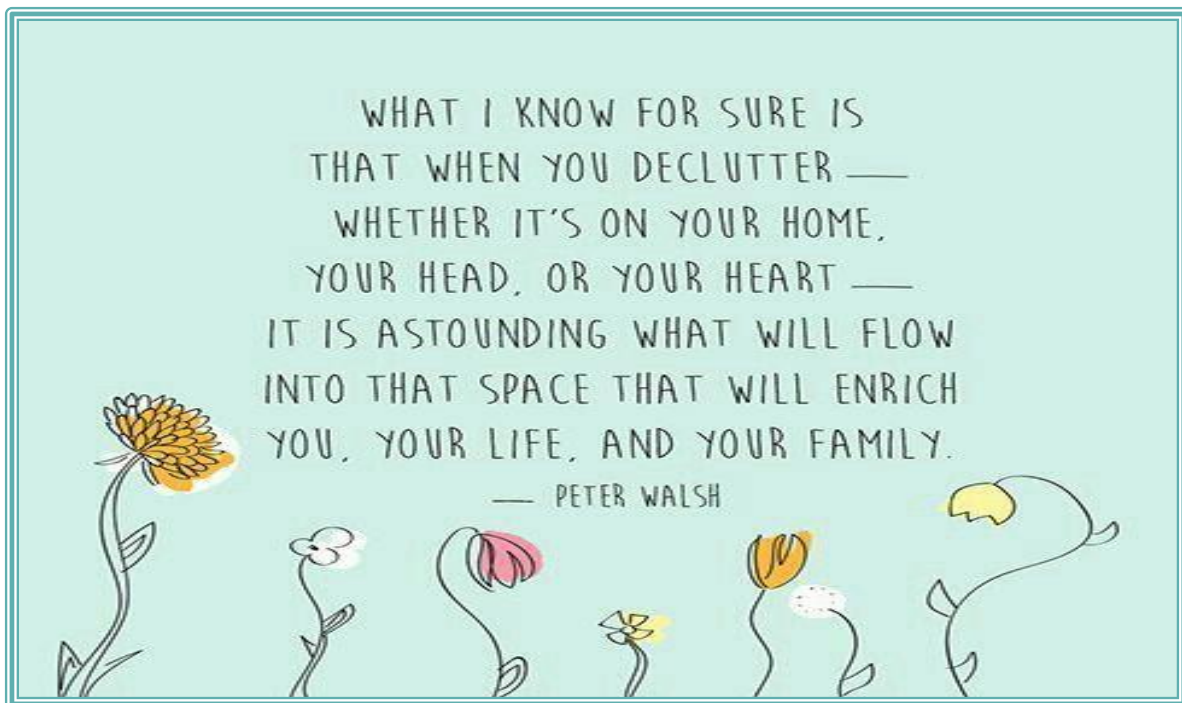
Taking a little time to focus on our needs and discover the things that make us happy helps us gain a clear and refreshed mind. Here are a few tips to follow when spring-cleaning your mental health:

1. **Create a to-do list:** Instead of your common project list, create a list of things you want to achieve emotionally over the next few months. Include dreams—things you've always wanted to do— as well as long-term and short-term goals that are easily achievable. Perhaps you have been wanting to reconnect with that old high school friend or maybe you wish you knew how to play the guitar. Put them on your list!
2. **Enhance your physical health:** Physical wellness is an important part of sustaining mental well-being. Exercising and eating healthy are a big part of physical wellness but often are hard to incorporate in your routine. Try something simple like replacing soda and coffee with herbal teas, or eating a small portion of dark chocolate instead of a donut or other sugary snack.
3. **Renew your spirit:** Yoga, Pilates, and meditation often lend themselves to mental cleansing. Taking just a few minutes each day to relax by yourself can make a huge difference and reduce negative energy and thoughts that may be consuming your day.



New beginnings and healthy steps toward better living can help us rid ourselves of negative emotions and built up stress that may be bringing us down. Remember that each day is a fresh start—just like spring.

<http://www.mymentalhealthday.org/2013/04/spring-cleaning-for-your-mental-health/>



Couples' Corner



Get Out the Broom...8 Ways to Spring Clean Your Marriage

By Lisa Brookes Kift, MFT

For many, spring is a time of renewal and recharge, a sleepy-eyed yawn and waking up from a winter slumber of sorts. People feel the urge to clean their homes, their cars and their work environments. Marriages can also benefit from a good spring clean as they can also “fall asleep” and get into a rut.

Here are some ways you can take the spirit of renewal into your marriage:

- **Take a walk down memory lane.** Do you remember when you met? Can you recall what drew you to each other? Take some time to reflect upon this time. Research shows that happier couples are the ones who can recall pleasant earlier memories. It can be an anchor for the relationship, a reminder of what you might have forgotten. “Oh yea, that’s what I fell in love with...”
- **Get back to checking in.** At one time you likely talked a lot, especially in the early stages of your relationship. As time goes on and life gets peppered with kid related responsibilities, family, social obligations and work. Re-prioritize a daily relationship check-in, even if brief. “How are you?...How are we?...Is everything ok?”
- **Look under the carpet for hidden resentments.** One problem that can be a consequence of insufficient communicating in marriage is the build-up of negative emotions like anger, disappointment, sadness or resentment. If there is something bothering you, bring it up with “I statements” rather than using attacking language.
- **Check your assumptions.** What if what you were upset with your partner because you misunderstood what he/she said or meant? What if you never clarified this? You’d be suffering for no reason. One of the best ways couples can avoid distress is to simply ask the other what they meant rather than assuming.
- **Create happy memories.** If boredom, “same ‘ol, same ‘ol,” and a lack of fun has permeated your marriage, it’s time to have positive experiences together. The more you internalize positive emotions, the more you can ease your brain away from the negative. Plan date nights, go out and play together!
- **If you broke it, fix it.** We all make mistakes and can inadvertently hurt our partners. The important thing for the health of relationships is taking ownership when it’s appropriate. John Gottman, PhD refers to successful repair attempts as “the happy couple’s secret weapon.”
- **More gratitude, please.** There is a lot of research out there now on the power of gratitude, individually and in relationships. Express appreciation for each other when possible. Make the effort to shift to a more positive (and reinforcing) cycle of support and gratitude for each other.

Take it up a notch if needed. If your marriage feels particularly “dusty” and in need of some TLC, get proactive and access the many tools available to help couples. A local marriage weekend workshop, a book or workbook, or a few counselling sessions might be just what you need.

If you are in the habit of sticking a band-aid over problems that have built up over the winter, now is your chance to heal any remaining wounds – to patch them up, make peace, and restore your relationship to health.

Remember that “Spring Cleaning” your relationship is a process – a deep clean, if you will. It requires patience, commitment, and hard work from both you and your partner. Remember to be gentle with each other through the process.

Adapted from <https://www.gottman.com/blog/spring-clean-your-marriage-again/>

“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

~World Health Organization



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