My PSYC 4950 Journal

1/25/12

My time management quiz score was a 32 which puts me at the low side of “you

do some things good” and pretty close to the high side of “Ouch.” Since starting back to school Ihave struggled with time management to balance all the stuff I have going on. When I dofollow a schedule I am much happier, less stressed, get stuff done and have time for personal and family things. I actually find it easier to focus on what I am working on at the particular time when I know that I have time allocated for the other things that I need to do. When I do not, the things that normally suffer are really the most important things like my health behaviors like exercise, sleep, and diet, and my family, and things that strengthen my spiritual self. I also tend to waste more time and get distracted more easily which in turn can lead to stress and guilt for me. I have started this week to get some things in hand and it is helping. I need to review the prioritizing and scheduling aspects of my time management.My goals for this week are:

by the 30th to have my office at school back in shape and my record keeping files in place have my revised time management schedule in place to begin next week begin exercising consistently again ( walked and chucked tonight!!)

2/6/2012

Budgeting has always been a difficult process for us probably due primarily to lack of discipline on our part. Over the past several months Karen and I have been working on a plan to begin to pay down debts that we have in order to free up our money for us to be able to use it for goals that we have such as travel and charity. We spent 2 hours this past Sunday discussing how to best track finances and insure that we don’t waste money unnecessarily. Our conclusion is that we are actually going to have to utilize 3 or 4 separate accounts so that we can more easily track expenditures. We have worked on a monthly budget for years in regard to our monthly bills in that what is owed is deducted from our checks (getting paid once a month as we do makes this so easy) but it is our left over funds for the above that we do not effectively track so using the different accounts will help us do so. We are both committed to doing this and are considering additional steps to reduce spending such as disconnecting our satellite dish. This will save a considerable amount of money a month and will eliminate a time waster (for me in particular). The few shows that we watch are accessible through the internet so we can still watch them. Sporting events are my biggest challenge with this although there are a lot available for viewing on line so I think I can survive this (or at least telling myself I can). We purposely delayed doing this until after the Super Bowl but really have not excuses now (hopefully CBS will broadcast the NCAA tournament online again this year!) ☹ if not.

2/7/12 Attempted for 15 minutes in my office at home. Did OK with shutting down my mind but had several distractions with my son playing with our dog upstairs and some children playing across the street shouting. Was able to get by that and relax and think I fell asleep for several minutes. Felt some relaxed but need to find a quieter place.

2/8/12 Waited too late today. Did before going to bed in hopes it would help me go to sleep more quickly. It did, went to sleep and did not finish the exercise today.

2/9/12 Cancelled classes due to back and neck pain and nausea from it so I figure that I should try to see if I can reduce my pain and the stress my body feels by trying to relax around lunch time. Also did it while waiting for a phone call to purposefully see if I could put out of my mind the issue that the call was about. I was able to push the call out of my mind and focus on my breathing. Shoulders were not hurting as bad. At some point fell asleep again and woke up at exactly the 20 minute point. I am obviously suffering from sleep deprivation. Felt refreshed and not tired like I was when I started.

2/10 Forgot to do it. Need to put into schedule. Will do as part of my personal time in the mornings on MWF and before starting class work on TTH.

2/11 Did relaxation at noon. Back and shoulders hurting and have to work at hospital this evening. Sat in chair in bedroom. Very successful concentrating on breathing. Did full 20 minutes.Dozed briefly but did not sleep through whole thing this time. Shoulders relaxed and did not hurt as bad. Felt more positive about working as I was unsure about doing so the way my shoulders were hurting.

2/12 Relaxed for 20 minutes. Dozed some again. Shoulders relaxed some and hurt less. Felt somewhat refreashed. Unsure if for me it is the relaxation or the dozing off that is most beneficial. I tend to doze some on my own at least once during the day anyway (I sound like a really old codger saying that) but think that the meditation has made my dozing more beneficial from refreshment standpoint.

2/13/12

Was somewhat successful meditating at the office today. Did it for approx 20 minutes. Did not doze and felt refreshed afterward. Took a short walk this evening when I got home (against my doctor’s orders) and felt as refreshed as when I meditated today.

Ran the numbers on my budget for the week. Not sure I have all my wife’s receipts but with what I had we stayed within budget but went way over on food and personal items. Partially because I bought a few valentine cards and stuff tonight but still would have been over some without that.

Also revamped my time management schedule. Not a lot of changes but moved a few things around that seem to be working better.

2/14

Meditation went well today. Did not sleep as much as I have been and able to relax.

2/15

Meditated in the office before office hours today. Was feeling tired which prompted me to meditate. Dozed off several times and awoke as my chin hit my chest. Not the best for my sore neck but was rested and more energetic when I finished.

2/16

Meditated sitting in my bedroom when I got home today. Relaxed and fell asleep. Actually slept about 45 minutes. Felt much better after not feeling well earlier in the day.

2/17/12

Meditated while getting my back manipulated at the chiropractor’s office. The electrical impulses from the stimulator gave me something to focus on apart from my breathing and the guitar music playing today helped to further relax me. Did not sleep. Felt very alert afterwards.

2/18

Meditated in a chair in the bedroom tonight. Room was mostly dark. Very few interruptions. Was able to keep mind quiet and stay awake for the 20 minutes. Refreshing after a busy day!

2/19

Didn’t think to meditate until around midnight. Was tired but not sleepy so used it to calm myself down to be able to go to sleep. Fell asleep toward end of time in chair in bedroom. Woke up about 3 a.m. and went to bed!

2/20

Meditated while at chiropractor’s office again today. Helps relax me for my adjustment and not feel tired afterward.

Completed my first week of food tracking and not really happy with my food choices or consistency in eating. Daughter came home for weekend so out and about more than usual. Really want to get my water intake more consistent and my fruit and vegetable intake increased. Read article today about brown rice syrup that is in some of the “health” foods that I do eat and how it may contain arsenic at unhealthy levels. Will have to get some different snack stuff I guess.

Used my time management schedule better this week. Have a lot of work to catch on for my PhD program so will have to put some extra hours in the next few weeks. Have been forbidden to exercise during this part of my back treatment so will use the time to help get caught up.

My budget for the week was within limits but went way over on the eating out/entertainment budget mainly because my daughter was in for the weekend and we did some things together as a family. Even though it is under the total amount, I had to “Rob Peter to pay Paul” by dipping into funds that were not for entertainment which could leave me short next week if I have some unexpected expenses in other areas. Not good!:(

2/27

I was within budget this week but was way out of sinc with eating out. When we get busy and don’t go to the grocery store we tend to eat out more so that usually means food that is not as good for me. I can handle it for a few days but usually start feeling real sluggish, and get sleepy more. I am already sleepy enough from sleep deprivation so I don’t need more yawning. It also messes with our budget so once again we robbed Peter to pay Paul in some areas.

Gladding’s article particularly stuck me about writing and laughter. I have found at many points in my life that writing has been helpful. I once had a patient commit suicide and the only way that I could grieve was to write them a letter. I was unable to cry until I allowed the words of sadness and anger to flow onto the paper in front of me. I have kept journals sporadically through the years and find it easier to review my day and to talk about my feelings that way. As he talked about laughter, along with Mora-Ripoli, I realize how little I take time to laugh on a daily basis. I love to laugh and have a good time but I push it out of my way for “more important things” even knowing the incredible health benefits that it promotes. I need to seek out laughter more often.

Last of all, I was kind of dreading taking the age quiz. I was greatly surprised that my age was 48.7 as opposed to 80+. The little I have been able to do from a health standpoint has paid off. The questions that it asks make me see even over my food diary how much more I need to be doing. Maybe I can be 35 again!

2/28

I watched some of Bill Cosby’s *Bill Cosby: Himself.* Although some might be offended by his humor, I love his depiction of family life. I watched a couple of his segments for about 35 minutes and found myself laughing out loud in my office at home. Prior to starting I had been pretty tired but felt rejuvenated and ready to get ready for the next days classes.

3/2

At around 9:45, my family and I found ourselves in the basement after the tornado warning sounded for the second (of what would be 3) time. The first time we sat and watched an episode of *Fringe* on DVD on a computer. We did not take the computer down with us the second time so we were talking about the siren and how it sounded real close at first and then seemed to get further away. I wondered out loud if the speakers turned ever so often to make sure the signal was heard for maximum distance. I then said there must be someone who has to crank the alarm and then change the speaker direction. The image was of someone standing out in the storm and did this. I then changed it to a bunch of rednecks in a camo painted 4X4 with a deer stand in the back and someone sitting on top of the deer stand cranking the siren while drinking beer from a cooler in the back of the truck, next it was the guy in the ice cream truck that comes through our neighborhood plays the ice cream truck music by day and doubles as the tornado siren at night. From there it got goofier and worse as my son and I just howled with the images portrayed. My wife finally told us to be quiet and we continued to explode in laughter whenever we looked at each other. The laughter took a somewhat stressful moment (lots of lightning and rain) and lightened it and relaxed us. Even though we had a third alarm to endure, I quickly went to sleep, totally exhausted and relaxed from laughing.

3/5

My son and I watched the first half of the movie *Leatherheads* tonight during dinner (we batch it on the nights my wife teaches). The movie is a fictitious representation of the early days of pro football starring George Clooney. Sports Illustrated recently had an article on what might have been the first super bowl between two teams made up of factory workers, criminals, etc. who had gained a reputation for the roughness of the game (one guy played part of a game that year with a compound fracture in his arm) and to see how un professional the game was shown with a new player on Clooney’s team that was HUGE and still in high school who was told to hit anyone that came close to the quarterback so the young man slugged three opposing players and a referee. Sounds stupid but found myself laughing at several parts. Was extremely tired when I sat down but gave me enough energy to finish this and get ready for the morning. So for me, laughter is both invigorating and relaxing. It helps me to view things differently and helps me to enjoy my life.

As for my final budget, we are showing being below budget each week but I do not anticipate changing yet. We are about to start using our new account to better track our spending so hopefully we will get an even better picture of what we are spending. I have found myself evaluating if something is really needed or not, or if we can eat at home instead of going out. Out grocery/misc spending was over this week as we bought ink for two printers at the house. All in all I think we are doing a good job and plan to continue doing this.

I set out this week to limit sugar intake and to increase my water intake for the week. I did well with the water but poorly with the sugar. This was primarily to eating out fast food more than normal and I just can’t bear to order water when the drink is free and I am a Dr. Pepper addict. I have re started the lower sugar intake this week and am doing better thus far. I feel much more sluggish when I eat out too much and the sugar in the drinks are not good for my blood sugar or my weight so I am committed to cutting them out.

3/20 journal entry is coming. Thought I posted and did not. I have misplaced my sheet I had things written on. Will post when found. Sorry!

3/26

My top 5 character strengths were; (1) Citizenship, teamwork, and loyalty; (2) Spirituality, sense of purpose, and faith; (3) Fairness, equity, and justice, (4) Judgment, critical thinking, and open-mindedness; and (5) honesty, authenticity, and genuineness. I see myself as a team player. At most places I have ever worked I have often been the one to do what either no one else could or would do. I would usually do it to help others burdens and to help keep the ship afloat so to speak until the Calvary arrived. I thrive in a team atmosphere and struggle in an atmosphere in which I have to be entirely self motivated and self sufficient. I need the fellowship, accountability, and the atmosphere of a team.

My spiritual self and faith is very much a part of my sense of purpose. My faith sustains and energizes me. My desire is for others to see my faith and spirituality in a manner that is enticing rather than arrogant and judgmental. My purpose is to love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength. This is an area that I need to work on more. I need to nourish my faith so that I might continue to grow as a disciple and an individual.

I attempt to show equal standing to all my students and every individual that I meet. This is hard at times because like everyone else, some individuals are easier to like than others but I try to treat all the same. I view everyone as being a person of value and worth so this helps me keep a fair perspective.

I have always been a person who prefers to step back and think about something than make a snap decision. This is why I often ask students to send me an e-mail about a question on a test, or something else so I can assess things more clearly.

The last strength is something that I do want to convey. I want people to find me the same person whether they see me in the classroom, at church, or at Wal-Mart. I want others to feel comfortable around me and to know that I do care about them as an individual.

My bottom 5 strengths were: (20) zest, enthusiasm, and energy; (21) creativity, ingenuity, and originality; (22) love of learning, (23) self-control and self-regulation; and (24) appreciation of beauty and excellence

I was not surprised by 4 of the 5. I can have periods of enthusiasm and energy but are often short lived. Some of this is physiological. I have suffered from sleep deprivation for almost 2 years now for various reasons. When I consistently exercise and watch my diet it helps but even then it is limited. What I desire is more passion about all aspects of life which fuels my interest in the subject we are studying.

I have never been super creative or original. I can carry through with an idea or project but if I am the creative juice for something the juice can die quickly or be non-existent. Again, it can have its moments but not often. Akin to this but not listed is spontaneity which I find difficult.

Love of learning is the one I am surprised about. I told my class mentor earlier in the semester when I took this test that I guess I should just quit my PhD work now. I love to learn but I am not necessarily motivated to make myself learn. If I have to look up something or read something new then I will do it but rarely do I say, “Oh, I think I will do some research on that topic tomorrow”

Self-control is my biggest vice. This is why I struggle with time mgmt, budgeting, exercising, eating properly etc. I have poor self-control and discipline. It has caused me a lot of personal guilt and regret. It is the one area that I wish to work on consistently but often gets in the way of me doing it. What a paradox!

Last of all is appreciation of beauty and excellence. I do appreciate beauty and strive for personal excellence in what I do. I guess I don’t go out of my way though to seek it out, especially the beauty part. The most beautiful thing I believe that I have ever seen is the Grand Canyon. Even today, when I see a picture or see something on the TV about it I have to stop and look at it. I don’t do that for every day beauty and really should allow myself to.

April 2, 2012

I took the optimism test and was completely blown away by the results. I have always been told by others and have looked at myself as being predominantly optimistic but according to the test I am a lot more pessimistic than optimistic. When it comes to permanent good events, I rated a 2 which is very pessimistic, but am a 2 on permanent bad events which is moderately optimistic. For pervasive good events I was a 3 which is moderately pessimistic, while I was a 4 for pervasive bad events which is average. For hopefulness I scored a -1 which says I am moderately hopeless. For permanence good events, I scored a 4 which was average, for permanence. I was really disturbed by this until I finished working on the power point for class in the morning and I realized why my score was what it was. I tend to look at most things in my life as individual events rather than looking at the big picture. As I face each event, stressed filled or not, I tend to assess them and myself based on the event, as opposed to how everything works together. This no doubt makes me dread the next event, and has helped me to develop a kind of matter of fact attitude toward life. Where it may appear that I am a steady plotter, I endure one thing and then make ready for the next. For me it has not only robbed me of some of my optimism, it has also robbed me of joy and a passion or ”zest” for life. I plan to change this by practicing gratitude and to develop a more optimistic view by challenging my pessimistic self.

As for the other assignment, I gave myself the gift of allowing myself to watch the season premier of “The Killing” on AMC even though I had not accomplished all that I had hoped to over the weekend. I allowed myself to do so without thinking about the mound of stuff calling my name, and to not feel guilt. It was very relaxing and rewarding. As for doing something for someone else, I had a situation with a student that I inadvertently was able to help with something even before I knew there was a problem. It is always challenging to be sure that I am being fair across the board with students but felt I needed to offer something (around an assignment) to one of my classes that I would not normally offer. There were only a handful of students who took advantage of what I did, and the student who I helped was one of those. (Sorry but I can’t offer more specific details). Where I enjoyed my gift to myself, the gratitude that was expressed in an inadvertent act was more gratifying. They both have their place in my life though and realize that I need to continue to practice both.

4/9/12

When I look at my top 5 strengths and compare them to Seligman’s test, I think two in particular stand out. One is critical thinking. I would much prefer to step back and evaluate things than to make a snap decision. I feel much more at ease and confident in decisions in which I can do this. That is why I will often tell students that I need to think about something before answering it. I like to have the ability to examine it. Another of my strengths that is signature is spirituality. I have had to decide on many occasions in my life whether to stand for my beliefs or stay silent and have chosen the former. It is my spirituality that gives me peace in the midst of stress. I find it very invigorating. When I think of mindfulness and savoring and focusing on the now and on the positive, my faith is what I generally focus on for stability. Authenticity is another signature strength in my mind. I don’t have to try to be authentic but I do try to guard against being unauthentic. This means not being afraid to say when I don’t know something in class, or to admit that I am scared, etc. This may not be a signature strength in some ways though because I can compartmentalize my emotions very easily and shut them down, which is not being authentic when I do that. I don’t try to pretend I am feeling something, I can just not feel at times if I am not careful. When I am authentic, spiritual, and practice critical thinking, I am less stressed and energetic.

I can honestly say that I have experienced flow when using my critical thinking skills. When I am researching a paper, or working on a project for work or school, I can work for hours without realizing it, often without stopping to eat, drink, or even use the bathroom. On the other hand, when doing something that I do not enjoy, it is like pulling teeth or watching grass grow. To always experience that in a work setting (or otherwise) would be great!

Since my scores for the optimism test were toward the pessimistic end, I attempted to use the ABC’s of optimism this week when I recognized that I was thinking pessimistically. This was particularly difficult for me this week as I suffered from a major migraine and other physical ills. I felt like junk for several days and realized over the weekend that I was probably enhancing the pain and nausea I was experiencing by my attitude, so I attempted to change my self talk. It helped some and allowed me to get some work done. I think I realize just how negative I think by the way I feel some days. Today I have not felt well and feel I have not been very positive in my outlook. I was really stressed early on and again attempted to do to things, first meditate and practice some mindfulness, and second, change my outlook on things! I allowed myself to not look at some problems I was encountering as overwhelming but as chores that I would soon finish. As I did this my mood became lighter.