

FLATTMANN FILES

February 2022

“Quality Is No Accident”

JOY IN THE MUNDANE

What I Appreciate About Being in a Rut

It's been a long time since I have watched the 1993 classic “Groundhog Day,” but this month, I can't help but think of poor Phil Connors in that classic rut.

If you haven't seen the movie, it stars Bill Murray as Phil Connors, a weatherman sent to report on Punxsutawney Phil's weather prediction on — you guessed it — Groundhog Day. Forced to spend the night, Phil wakes up the next day and relives the day ... over and over again! In the end, Phil is able to break the “spell” by becoming a better person and finally living in a way that benefits his community.



I can't help but sympathize with Phil Connors sometimes. As a parent, it's easy to fall into a “rut.” I go to work, come home, spend time with my family, and go to sleep, and we rinse and repeat that routine almost every day. I think this is the same for a lot of people, and over time, it can be unamusing and busy. We get bogged down with schedules and making sure our children get from one event to the next, and we often forget the most important part of a rut: appreciating it.

A few times each day, I have to remind myself to slow down, look around myself, and appreciate all that I have. It's easy to forget that I am a business owner, am married to the love of my life, have

two great kids, and live in a nice home. I'm living my dream, and sometimes, I have to remember to appreciate it.

The moments when I realize this the most are often early in the morning when I'm outside with the dog. I'll be standing there, waiting for her to finish her business, and instead of appreciating the natural beauty of God's creation in my backyard, I'm scrolling through my work email. You can imagine which view is better to wake up to.

Thankfully, for most of us, each day can have variety, even if there is a rut. We're not trapped reliving the events of one singular day over and over again, but if I had to, I already know what day I would want to experience again. I would go back to Christmas — any Christmas — and spend more time savoring each moment with my family. It's one of those days each year where everyone is jovial and kind to each other, and while it's chaotic, I love the mad dash to fit everything into one day. It's a beautiful moment that I wouldn't mind experiencing more than just once each year.

A close second for “days I would like to live over again” would be my wedding day. I want to go back and tell that nervous kid to not be so worried. It ends up being a wonderful day, and he should enjoy more time with people who are there.

But since I can't relive those days, I'm enjoying the days that do feel repetitive instead. In fact, I was recently excited to come to work and check my to-do list on a Monday! That previous weekend, we had hosted a birthday party for my daughter and spent all day Sunday at her volleyball tournament. Needless to say, I was happy to return to the routine come Monday.

After all, sometimes, all we need is a little shift in perspective to teach us to appreciate the mundane.



-Grady Flattmann

Brock vs. Brock

The Man Who Sued Himself

On July 1, 1993, Robert Lee Brock made a mistake. By his own account, he had a few too many alcoholic beverages that evening, and in his drunken state, he committed breaking and entering, as well as grand larceny. Brock was arrested, and the court sentenced him to 23 years behind bars at the Indian Creek Correctional Center in Chesapeake, Virginia.

In 1995, Brock decided he deserved restitution. Reasoning that he had violated his own civil rights, he sued himself for \$5 million. For his family's pain and suffering, as well as his children's college tuition, he requested \$3 million. He also asked for \$2 million to support his needs during his 23-year prison sentence.

Central to Brock's claim was that, due to his drinking, "I caused myself to violate my religious beliefs. This was done by my going out and getting arrested, which caused me to be in prison." And since he was a ward of the state, he explained that Virginia should pay the \$5 million on his behalf. After all, he was incarcerated and unable to work, and the state was responsible for his care. Plus, he promised to pay the money back after his release.

In a move that shocked no one (except, perhaps, Brock), Judge Rebecca Beach Smith dismissed his case. While she did call his claim "ludicrous," she also praised his creativity, stating that he "presented an innovative approach to civil rights litigation."

Perhaps the lawsuit against himself wasn't his first or last attempt at legal restitution. He once filed 29 complaints in a single year. Due to the repeated suits, the court removed his ability to file further litigation. "None of Brock's allegations have ever been found by any court to have any merit," the decision read. "Because Brock's repeated, frivolous claims have placed a significant burden on this court, as well as on the district court ... we hereby impose sanctions upon Brock."

Brock's case ranked No. 3 on Time Magazine's list of Top 10 Outrageous Legal Battles. So, while he didn't achieve wealth, he did gain fame. It was an impressive feat for a man who found a novel way to take personal responsibility for his actions.

More Than a Pinch of Salt

3 Ways to Reduce Your Sodium Intake

The average American adult eats 1,000 milligrams (mg) more than the recommended amount of sodium each day. Salt enhances flavor, is easy to add to food, and tastes pretty delicious. Unfortunately, too much of it is unhealthy and can cause high blood pressure or kidney damage. Here are some steps you can take to reduce your sodium intake without sacrificing flavor.

Read food labels. Processed foods tend to contain a lot of sodium, so it's best to shop for fresh meat, fruits, vegetables, and dairy. In particular, avoid premade sauces whenever possible. If you need to buy prepared meals, always read the label and look for items with less than 6,000 mg of sodium — the highest amount a meal can contain and still be labeled "healthy" by the FDA. Check serving sizes as well; 400 mg of sodium in one meal sounds good until you realize there are 2–3 servings in the package.

Try other flavors. We have easy access to more types of salt than ever, but unfortunately, sea salt, Himalayan salt, and kosher salt don't contain any less sodium than the table variety. Luckily, there are plenty of other

seasonings available to liven up your food. Experiment with new spices; the bolder the flavor, the less you'll notice the reduced salt. Garlic is a popular choice, but check the nutrition information — salt is included in many spice blends.

Keep the shaker out of sight. If you want to reduce the amount of salt you use, try putting it away. Keeping salt on the table increases the temptation to sprinkle a little bit more on your meal. You can still get up and get the salt out of the cupboard if it's really needed, but you'll have the opportunity to reflect on your actions and make a more conscious decision. It will also help kids, who may instinctively reach for the salt or copy their parents.

Cutting salt takes time, but the preference for salt is an acquired taste, and it can be unlearned. It may take several weeks or even a couple months to get used to the flavor of reduced salt, but those who successfully do often find salty foods they used to eat unpalatable. Once the extra sodium is gone from your diet, you probably won't miss it — and your body will be a lot healthier for it.



TAKE A *BREAK*

SOLUTION

5	1	6	4	3	6	2	8	7	2
3	7	8	2	7	9	1	5	4	6
2	7	8	1	8	7	3	4	5	9
1	9	1	3	2	3	7	7	6	8
2	9	4	2	6	5	6	1	7	3
8	6	2	4	1	7	5	3	8	6
4	8	4	1	7	5	3	8	4	1
6	6	9	7	3	7	5	2	2	6
7	3	5	2	4	8	1	9	6	7
2	8	1	6	9	3	3	5	7	4

4								5	
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		2	4	1	7			3	
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NOT ANOTHER CANDLELIT DINNER

Get Creative This Valentine's Day

Roses, chocolate, and fancy restaurants are Valentine's Day staples for a reason. They're classic and timeless, but if you've done them year after year, they could also get a little bit boring. To wow your significant other this Feb. 14, think beyond the most famous ways to celebrate.

They'll probably appreciate a twist — and the time you spent making their day special.

Create a relationship scrapbook.

Nothing says "I love you" like a gift you've made with your own hands. By making a scrapbook of your favorite memories with your partner, you'll also amaze them with your sensitivity and dedication.

A scrapbook can consist of photographs, restaurant menus, movie tickets, wedding invitations,

vacation souvenirs, and some carefully

chosen words about why you value the relationship. Don't be afraid to get inventive with your decorations or scour the internet for tips and tricks.

Go stargazing.

What's more romantic than staring up at the stars? Your first step will be to find a local spot that's dark and secluded enough for a good view of the nighttime sky. Once you do, your next course of action will depend on the weather. If it's temperate, get a picnic blanket and enjoy the outdoors. If it's cold, stay in the car, turn off the headlights, and snuggle up. Don't forget to bring wine and a romantic snack. If all goes well, you might end up watching the sunrise.

Schedule a couples' spa day.

Forget what you think you know: Spa days are for everyone. Your other half will love the opportunity to experience a massage, sauna, and other assorted treatments. Plus, many spas offer romantic couples' packages with champagne and chocolate-covered strawberries. Once you're both sufficiently relaxed and looking your best, you'll likely feel closer than ever. Some spas also offer overnight stays so you can transition seamlessly into a romantic evening.

All of these ideas will take a little bit of planning, so it's time to start dreaming up your big surprise. When you see their reaction, your only concern will be how to top yourself next year.



MEDITERRANEAN STUFFED CHICKEN BREAST

This succulent chicken stuffed with cheese, artichokes, and sun-dried tomatoes is impressive on the plate but easy in the kitchen!

Ingredients

- 2 chicken breasts
- 2 oz mozzarella cheese, cubed
- 2 canned artichoke hearts, chopped
- 4 tsp sun-dried tomatoes, chopped
- 10 large basil leaves, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1/2 tsp curry powder
- 1/2 tsp paprika
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 365 F.
2. Cut a slit lengthwise to create a pocket in the middle of each chicken breast. Place the breasts on a baking sheet.
3. In a medium bowl, combine the mozzarella cheese, artichoke hearts, tomatoes, basil, and garlic.
4. Divide the mixture in half and stuff each chicken breast pocket. Using toothpicks, seal the edges of the pockets.
5. Season the chicken with curry, paprika, salt, and pepper, then bake for 20 minutes or until the chicken reaches 165 F.
6. Remove the toothpicks and serve with rice, potatoes, salad, or roasted vegetables!

Inspired by DiabetesStrong.com



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Is Clean Hydrogen the Energy of the Future? What You Need to Know

The European Union has made substantial investments in clean hydrogen as a renewable energy source, hoping it can help reduce carbon emissions. With the infrastructure bill Congress passed in November, the U.S. is also looking to invest in new energy sources, including clean hydrogen. But what is clean hydrogen, and why has so much hope been placed on it?

Hydrogen is already used today as an energy source, and while the hydrogen itself is clean, the process used to make it is not. The energy industry describes hydrogen using a color-coded system — hydrogen created with steam methane is gray, and hydrogen produced with fossil fuels is brown. Neither is considered clean energy.

Whether or not blue hydrogen is “clean” will depend on whom you ask. Blue

hydrogen is produced with methane, but the carbon is captured instead of released into the environment. Detractors argue that blue hydrogen is not more environmentally friendly than other existing technologies and point to its high costs. Proponents, however, consider it a stepping stone to the cleanest form of hydrogen.

Green hydrogen comes from electrolysis, a process that splits water into oxygen and hydrogen. For the hydrogen to be green, the electricity used to create it must come from renewable sources like wind, solar, or hydropower. The process almost completely eliminates emissions, and it’s the form of energy the EU is investing in the most. One day, it may even power cars.

But clean hydrogen has its detractors. Some environmental activists argue that we need to move away from gas power

entirely and use less electricity overall. In the case of blue hydrogen, they also say that simply capturing the carbon is not enough to ward off climate change. Energy experts who otherwise support clean hydrogen also point out that it’s currently much more expensive than fossil fuel production.

The U.S. has launched a plan to bring the cost of green hydrogen down significantly by 2030, but its use currently accounts for less than 1% of total annual hydrogen production worldwide. Before clean hydrogen can be a viable energy alternative, governments and industries need to deploy significant resources to develop infrastructure, expand production, and drive down costs. Whether clean hydrogen will be a major future energy source depends on how much the world is willing to invest in it.