

Title of Action Research Project: Happier Me.....Happier Us?

Name of School:

Culver Community Middle/High School

Principal's Name:

Brett Berndt

Principal's Email:

berndt@culver.k12.in.us



Background Leading to this Inquiry

- The life of a principal can be very overwhelming with the multiple hats that must be worn. As an administrator, I was finding myself spending more time at school (school events) than with my family. Therefore, I wanted to be intentional in scheduling time with my family and for myself. The purpose of my Action Research was to create a 30 day activity chart to intentionally spend more time with my family and create activities to increase my mental health. Does a happier me create a happier us?



Purpose of This Inquiry

- The purpose of my action research is to find ways to become mentally healthier. I did this through several activities in a month that would increase my mental health. I believe that if I am mentally healthier, it will lead to a more positive atmosphere at work and in life!



My Wondering

- With this purpose, I wondered what positive impacts there would be for my family/work family if I were mentally healthier.
- Would these actions lead to an increase in staff moral because the leader feels healthier.
- Is there a relationship between mental health and work production.
- What relationship is there between leadership happiness and staff moral.
- How will mental happiness increase family time?
- How will these actions impact family time?



My Actions

- The first thing I did is create a 30 day calendar challenge with different activities that could possibly increase my mental health.
- This 30 day challenge would be used during the month of January 2020.
- Activities were broken down into four categories: students/school, friends/others, myself, and family.
- There was no particular order for events, I just checked them off after completing the day challenge.



My Actions

- I rated each event out of 10 points on how it made me feel after completing it
- After 7 events I would write a journal entry to reflect on activities
- Data was collected for 30 days
- Data was averaged based on activity category to determine best activities that increased my mental health



My Actions

- I surveyed my children on how much family time was spent before the 30 Day challenge – rating 1-10
- I performed a post survey with my children to determine if the results changed for family time after the 30 day challenge – rating 1-10
- Pictures were taken for data during certain events



My Actions

- **I was not able to complete a couple activities on the 30 Day challenge due to timing**
- I was not able to survey my staff on the mental health of their leader – staff moral due to COVID



Data Collection – 30 Day Challenge

Chart

Read for 20 minutes **DNH**	Take an hour walk 8/10	Eat lunch with students 7/10	Spend 5 minutes deep breathing 7/10	Send a text to someone important to you, just say hi 7/10	Sit in a classroom for the pure joy of student learning 9/10
Call a friend today – have a real conversation No texting 7/10	Spend intentional time today with someone you love 10/10	Treat yourself to a meal out 5/10	Don't watch TV today 5/10	No social media today 9/10	Listen to a podcast today 10/10
Put your phone away after dinner, don't touch until tomorrow 9/10	Family Game Night 10/10	Date Night with wife 10/10	Date night with Daughter 10/10	Date night with Daughter 10/10	Take a Nap 8/10
Call a parent today and brag on his/her student 9/10	Go to bed early tonight 5/10	Do one kind thing for a stranger today. 10/10	Only eat healthy foods today 5/10	Go out and do a family activity 10/10	Buy yourself something **DNH**
Take a lunch during school 3/10	Watch a movie with the family 10/10	Buy your wife a surprise gift 5/10	No school activities today 9/10	Organize something today 9/10	Spend time with relatives 8/10

My Data

- 30 Day Challenge breakdown –
- **Myself** Category – 12 events (2 not performed) 7.1 Average Rating
- **Students/School** Category – 6 events, 7.7 Average Rating
- **Friends/Others** Category – 3 events, 8.0 Average Rating
- **Family** Category – 9 events, 9.7 Average



My Data

- Children Survey (Based out of 10, time spent with family)
- Pre 30 Day Challenge
- Brynn – 4/10
- Ashlynn – 6/10
- Post 30 Day Challenge
- Brynn – 7/10
- Ashlynn - 8/10



Date Night with wife...Columbus, Ohio Hockey Game



Family Time - SkyZone



Daddy/Daughter Date – Notre Dame Women's Basketball



Family Time – Skiing at Boyne Mountain



Emails from Staff – Appreciation

- Thanks--I appreciate all you said. I was worried that since I felt like crap on Friday that maybe I went on and on too much in my email. I've been trying to voice my thoughts and opinions a bit more than I have in the past . . . when I left the meeting, I decided that I needed to write. I do appreciate your leadership style--it definitely is a wonderful piece of this school system. This has just been a unique year--unfortunately, not in a positive way. This 6th grade class isn't helping. Your talk on Friday really did help alleviate some of the pressure and stress -- and helped focus my goals for this year.
Thanks again,
Todd
- THANK YOU so much for being so understanding about the days I have missed and will probably miss this year. I am very blessed to have such great administrators. Liz



Journal Entries

- Week 1 Entry – This week was filled with many family time activities. We took a 5 day trip to Boyne Mountain to go skiing with our family. This was an amazing time and much needed family time. This was the first time in a long time that school events were not even a thought....just relax and have some fun. Spending quality time with the family always puts life into perspective and recharges the soul.
- Also during this week I spent some time deep breathing and taking walks. The deep breathing was nice, but didn't have a huge overall impact. However, taking walks always seem to clear my mind and allows me to refocus my mind on things I need to do. I need to be determined enough to fit in daily walks....not there yet, but working on it 😊



Journal Entries

- Week 3 – This week was a fantastic week. My activities ranged from taking a quick nap, putting my phone away after dinner, family game night, and date nights with each family member. During the grind you forget what it is like to just get away with each family member in an one-on-one setting. When you get to focus on just that one person, you get to connect in ways that are not possible with the group. Many personal conversations come out and you get that satisfactory feeling when you are smiling with your child. The date night with the wife was so amazing. Just spending quality time with her makes the world go around. We are not able to do this type of activity often, so when we do I really appreciate it and it becomes difficult to reflect in words what it actually means to me.
- Took a nap this afternoon....wow, what a difference it made. Sometimes you just need an energy boost. Naps don't get into my schedule often, but I would love to start putting them in if it makes me feel like this.....
- Phone away after dinner....no problem. Well, at least for tonight. At times this is very difficult as I take pride in communicating with people (school and personal). However, it does always occupy your time and mind. It was very nice not to worry about my phone, emails, texts and just enjoy the night with my family. I really need to start doing this more often. We can make this a family policy so we can enjoy each other and recharge for the next day. It actually might make myself more productive the next day as well.
- Family game night was a blast. We started to play this new game called "Brain Fart." My kids love it. The challenge is to think of many activities that go with a letter (dice controls activities). Everyone is shouting out answers and tries to think of them as fast as they can.....we are a competitive group, so it can become crazy. Needless to say I love family game nights as we spend time together and NO PHONES are allowed.....might be starting to get a theme here ☺



My Discoveries

- Being intentional with planning activities was a great way to challenge me to actually take the time to perform the tasks. This might be my new way to force me to relax and enjoy more moments in life!
- Planning family events was most effective in increasing my mental state. They got the most bang for the buck!
- Some school events increased my mental health, calling parents or performing tasks that made others feel better did help increase my mental health.
- Events that were just about me.....didn't do so well. Note to self 😊
- My job is very important to me...but it isn't my life. I need to focus on the most important things to me....my family. I believe if I do this, it will make me happier and allow me to be more effective at my job as well.
- It is about balance – I can focus on my job during the school day....after that I need to focus on quality time spent with the family!



Where Am I Heading Next

- My plan is to create a 30 day challenge of family activities during each school month (August – May) to help me focus on my family
- Summer months will be off due to being home more 😊
- I will pass this 30 day challenge onto my staff at school. I know staff members are stressed and need to increase their mental health.
- WE can plan more activities during our staff PD time that will help increase our mental health...fun events to allow us to relax and refocus.
- I know a happier leader can help others feel happier and want to perform their tasks at a more effective rate.
- Mental Health can play a huge role in how you perform.....happier me will make a happier us!



Bibliography

- Teamann, Amber(Oct 2019). Self care for principals...it should be a priority!
www.technicallyteamann.com/self-care-for-principals

