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A Real Mom: A habit worth sharing

Real Mom

MinnMoms Columnist

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Info gathering, info sharing - a matter of passion and habit, sometimes even willpower.

My family knows that I'm a magazine reader. Give me a magazine, or better yet, a stack of magazines and I'm a happy camper. There's something about the combination of content - brief articles, longer features, tons of tips, and lots of pictures - that is engaging and accommodating no matter where I am. A magazine is something I can pick up when I have only a few minutes or something I can lose myself in over a long afternoon. It can be purposeful or whimsy, whatever I choose.

Amid busy work and family schedules one recent weekend, my magazine pile was at least seven deep, and then three more arrived in the mail. It took a lot of willpower to save these for the weekend, one of our few that wasn't chock full of commitments. In anticipation, I even posted on Facebook that magazine reading was the weekend agenda, and my friends all



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Now my friends also know that in addition to devouring magazines, I'm the one to pass along article links from the newspaper, retweet columns on Twitter, and provide summaries of current business books, too. I'm not sure which I like better: acquiring information or sharing it. All, I know is it's a matter of passion and habit.

All this set-up does have bearing on parenting an addict and on the direction of this column, so follow along for some insights and resources.

Searching for info is either feast or famine

In my unexpected role as the parent of an addict, I often find myself searching for information. Sometimes it's easy to find, and other times it's a wild goose chase. (Don't even get me started on the disservice that search-engine marketing has had on trying to find simple things like "Minnesota Addiction Sources." Oh sure, you come up with a few legitimate links like Hazelden or The Retreat, but you also come up with pages of 1-800 type aggregators with no Minnesota connections whatsoever ah, the perils of keyword buying.)

It is, in fact, the quest for information - to gather and to share - that remains one of the important reasons for writing this column.

Declaration of choice

A few weeks ago, I declared that I was going to refocus myself from our son's addiction and related problems; I was going to focus on all the other aspects of my life that I enjoy and that deserve my attention. Then my son showed up. Then he ran out of money, again. Then he planted his flag that he never plans to stop using. These aren't excuses for me to remain focused, just realities that I will acknowledge but that are mine to choose to settle on or not. It's a worthwhile, even healthy, declaration to refocus but a nearly impossible one to just will myself to adhere.

I've said it before: addiction talk often becomes addicting. We get so wrapped up in it that we're missing out on other things not to mention drowning ourselves in the very problem that precipitated our focus. So my declaration morphed into choice.

Parenting an addict, unfortunately, becomes a habit, but what we learn is we can choose our role, choose our participation and choose our connection. If we create helpful habits, we need to stick with them. When we create exhausting (often destructive) ones, we need to



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change our actions. We have to remain keenly aware, and that happens as a combo of self reflection and dialogue with others who touch this topic.

You'll note, I write in past tense of my declaration to refocus and in the present in regard to choice. It was an ambitious declaration - maybe even a plea to change my connection, my dependence on my role as an addict's parent. Fortunately, as I wrote, edited and restarted the column, the declaration became a catalyst - for me and, I hope, for readers of this column.

Reading recommendations and online resources

This week, I'm adding a couple of new elements to the column: a brief reading recommendation (likely not from the addiction/recovery library per se but related nonetheless) and an online resource for your exploration and participation.

One of the current trends has to do with understanding how our brains work and how this translates into everyday insights and actions. There are a number of good reads out there on this topic. In particular, I highly recommend "The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business," by Charles Duhigg. He introduces a concept called "habit loop" that activates even when higher level of mental activity have ceased.

Habit loops entail three steps. A cue, a routine and a reward. While most of his examples are about how organizations can benefit from understanding, and changing, habit loops, he also cites its relevance to addiction. He further suggests that the same principle is at work within the recovery community such as Alcoholics Anonymous. He calls AA "a giant machine for changing habit loops."

The book helped me look at my own habits - whether magazine reading or parenting an addict - from a new perspective, and it helped me appreciate the challenges that an addict (or anyone who needs/wants to change) faces and why others can't will change upon someone, even someone who is exhibiting a poor-choice habit. The book also spends a good deal of time on willpower as a learned habit. Check it out or follow the author on Twitter at [@cduhigg](#).

You can find me on Twitter at [@ThePotheadsMom](#). I'll continue to chronicle observations and events of our own story but also share links from addiction, recovery, psychology sources and retweets from other parents and recovering addicts.

Back on task

After my short lapse with the column, I'm back on task with personal updates and the additions of book and online sources mentioned above. Thank you for reading, and please know that if you're on this journey, too, that you are not alone.

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