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Welcome to the podcast today, as I've said in the last few podcasts. If you want to be a guest, send me an email at MJ Murray Vachon dot com. When you send the email, you don't have to know what topic you want to discuss. We'll figure it out just like today's guest and I did, who was brave enough to send an email and here she is. Thank you so much for sending the email and being open to being on the podcast. Let's begin by you telling our audience a little bit about yourself.

Guest: 0:55

I'm a junior at Notre Dame. I'm studying neuroscience and I'm originally from South Carolina.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 1:01

Great. So, tell our audience what topic you want us to think through and talk about today.

Guest: 1:08

I'm interested in learning more about what your perspective is on a healthy morning routine.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 1:13

I'm really interested because I don't know you, I just met you four minutes ago, that you're a neuroscience major because I think a healthy morning routine really comes down to neuroscience, so this will be a really interesting conversation.

Guest: 1:27

I hope so.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 1:28

What's your current morning routine like?

Guest: 1:30

It varies depending on the day. Unfortunately, because I'm a college student, my class schedule often determines my morning routine. Normally I like to wake up at the same time every day. However, sometimes on Thursdays I will definitely sleep in. Then of course, on the weekends my routine changes pretty drastically. I like to stay up late and work on homework and then as a result I get up late.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 1:56

Yes, you are actually in one of the most challenging times of one's life to create a steady and predictable morning routine. But I think some of the things that we're going to talk about today can be really helpful. When you think about your current morning routine,

which you're saying is pretty varied, are there any things that you do every morning once you get up that are predictable and helpful?

Guest: 2:21

Yeah, I always get dressed, brush my teeth, wash my face that kind of thing. I usually look over my notes to see what I'm doing that day. I look at my schedule and I prepare myself for the day ahead.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 2:32

If you could make your routine better, what would it be?

Guest: 2:35

I think unfortunately, knowing what I know, I would have to wake up every day at a certain specified time, regardless of the day.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 2:42

Do you have a particular time in mind?

Guest: 2:44

I'd like to get up at about 7:30, 7 ish.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 2:47

A lot of the information I'm going to share with you today, I have learned from Dr. Andrew Huberman, who has this really intense podcast, which is grounded in the latest science. The first part I'm going to talk about is when do you think your morning routine starts?

Guest: 3:04

I think it starts the night before.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 3:06

I want you to think back to your childhood, what did you learn in your childhood about evening routines, going to bed and about morning routines?

Guest: 3:15

I was very lucky because, my mom had chosen to stay home with us. My mom made sure that I had a healthy nighttime routine and that I wouldn't eat or drink before bed. So, I didn't have to get up in the middle of the night, go to the restroom as a baby. Usually, we had story time and always made sure to brush my teeth and I was in bed at the same time every night.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 3:35

That is terrific. I think your mom understood the importance of routine for a child, and that the foundation of all wellness is sleep. Whether you're 2, 22 or 82. Our sleep really is what allows our body and our mind to function optimally. She did a couple things that allowed you to have the best nighttime sleep possible. One is that you didn't eat before you went to bed. A lot of Americans eat. We know from research that our body has a 12-hour clock that repairs and restores all the cells in it at night. Once people are done with dinner, they should not just turn the light off in the kitchen, but they should also close their mouth for the rest of the night so their body can begin this essential restorative process. The other thing that you're saying is that you went to bed around the same time and I shoot for around 80 to 85%. It's not going to be realistic for a college student seven days a week, but what we do know in this area is if you shoot for 80% of the time, waking up at the same time, going to bed at the same time, you probably are going to give your body what it needs. Three other things of leaning into biology, sometimes people call them sleep hacks, and I'm stealing this from Huberman. You don't hack something when you're leaning into doing it the way that it's meant to do it. One is to stay away from overhead light after dinner time. If you need to have lights, you've got, table lights, desk lights, but try to begin to close down your body. I think of it as just logical. In evening, we're always preparing to close down, just like the sun. And in the morning we're always preparing to rev up. One of the things that's helpful at night is to reduce the light. Devices should be on night shift, which is a different kind of light for your eyes. It's less activating. You also want to lower the temperature. Again, you don't probably have a lot of control of what the temperature of your dorm room is, but you would have the control of how heavy the blankets are, how heavy your pajamas or whatever you wear to bed is. That really contributes because our body is lowering its temperature at night in helping us get the best kind of sleep. The last thing is devices. I'm curious at bedtime, where's your phone?

Guest: 5:58

My, my phone is with me. I have a, an irrational fear of waking up too late. I always have to check my phone, at the last possible second. I've been trying to leave it on my desk and I check it and I know the alarm is set, but sometimes I just want to have it with me, especially if I have something important to do early in the morning.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 6:16

One of the things I recommend because the phone is downloading information all night long that actually disrupt our sleep. I do understand that people use their phone as an alarm, but that is only in the last 20 years. Prior to that, people woke up with roosters or they woke up with alarm clocks. You probably don't have the opportunity to bring a rooster into your dorm, but you could go to Goodwill and you could buy an old-fashioned alarm clock. I swing by goodwill about twice a year because I never see anyone in my clinical practice that we don't have to look at this issue of sleep 100%. It's where I start with everybody and I really encourage people to turn off their phone and to use an alarm clock for two reasons. One is the phone is so tempting, it's a dark hole.

Secondly, for the reason I said before and there's a really quick solution to it, just go get a little big ben. What do you think of that idea?

Guest: 7:13

I actually have an alarm clock, so yes, I I'm more amenable to using it.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 7:17

We begin with sleep, and the more you can do those five things, the more you can get to bed, 80% of the time at around the same time the better for you. What time do you typically go to bed?

Guest: 7:28

I get in bed at 10 30. It varies when I actually fall asleep, but I'm usually consistent in putting myself in bed.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 7:37

That is terrific for a college student to go to bed at 10 30. That's actually really what we would love for all college students to do, and it's really doable, but you have to have the aspiration of, I want to have good sleep. What's it like? Are you someone who can usually fall asleep or is it harder to fall asleep?

Guest: 7:54

Harder to fall asleep. So sometimes I take Melatonin.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 7:56

Does that help?

Guest: 7:57

Yes.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 7:57

I want to share with you a really nice tool by Dr. Andrew Huberman called Non-Slip Deep Rest N S D R. This is a 10-minute mindfulness exercise that he leads you in that you can do in the afternoon or before you go to bed. Because one of the skills of falling asleep is being able to relax our minds. That is really hard to do as a college student. You're shaking your head, why do you think it's hard to relax your mind?

Guest: 8:26

Obviously there's a lot of pressure for everyone at every stage in their life, whether you have kids, whether you have a job. Right now, for us it's our schoolwork. Because every day is different and we have different activities seemingly every other day, it's nice to

essentially remind ourselves what we're doing the next day. For that reason, I'm thinking about my schedule.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 8:43

Exactly. One of the hardest parts of being a college student is the work never ends. It isn't if you're a bank teller, even me, I go, I see my clients, I come home, I'm done, but with school, you can never really get on top of it and then all of a sudden it's December and you're off for three weeks. It's not a schedule that allows your mind to rest on a daily basis. One of the foundations of a good morning is learning how to calm your mind so you can go to bed. So certainly, melatonin a lot of people use, we don't really want people using melatonin with young children because it can disrupt their serotonin system. But it is one of the things that you have found to be helpful. But this 10-minute guided meditation can also be a tool that you can have in your kit. Let's move to the morning. I like to encourage people to see their mornings as how do I wake up my body and how do I prepare my mind for the day? When you think about what you do to wake up your body, you said you brush your teeth, you wash your face. Anything else?

Guest: 9:49

I look over my notes about what I'm going to do that day. Make sure I don't forget anything. If there's something to look forward to I try to get myself enthused. Sometimes it's just oh man, I got to test, but, it'll be over soon. So, I think about something I'm going to enjoy later that week. I drink a cup of coffee almost every day and I walk across campus and I usually listen to music.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 10:09

You're doing a number of things that research says are really good. Again, if we think about from the beginning of time until electricity, people did what you just did. They woke up, they had to walk outside to get wood to feed their chickens and they began to move. Huberman really encourages four things to lean into our biology. What we're really trying to do is get our dopamine system up and going for the day. As a neuroscientist major, can you explain to our audience what the dopamine system is in lay like terms?

Guest: 10:46

Dopamine is one of our endocrine chemicals and essentially it is almost like the happiness drug that our body uses. When something good happens in our life it motivates us essentially.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 10:57

So, it's a motivator and it's a reward. In the morning what we're trying to do is get the dopamine system up and going so we're motivated to do our day and then get rewards as we go along. Here's four things that we can do to lean into that. One is to try to get

natural light within the first hour that you wake up. When I say that as you are here in gloomy South Bend, what's your reaction?

Guest: 11:28

Yeah, I'm a bit skeptical sometimes. It is difficult when you wake up early in the morning, there isn't light because the sun isn't out. Recently we've been blessed with some good weather, so I would say that does happen for me.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 11:39

One way of working around that, because we aren't in a climate and you are from a climate that has lots of sunlight, so you probably can speak a little bit to the difference. What's the difference?

Guest: 11:49

It gets me so much more excited to be out in the morning when there's natural light, because I feel like I'm in the correct place to be. Whereas, if I wake up and it's still nighttime, I'm literally saying to myself, I should still be asleep right now.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 12:02

Yes. That's the science. That's how our body really wants to be in the light. Huberman has a really nice concept that what we're trying to do is create an Arizona climate in our body in the middle of winter. We're trying to do these things in order to get our dopamine system up, motivated and ready for the day. If you don't have sunlight, you can also use LED lights which are everywhere because people in this climate suffer from seasonal affective disorder. One of the things I do in the morning is I sit and I read for a while and I just have that lamp on in front of me. It's such a cheesy thing. People never want to believe this works, but many of my clients use them and they're really surprised. One of the neat things that has happened in the last few years is I have a lot of clients who just have them at their breakfast table and their kids eat breakfast with that light going on them. I have a number who have put them in their children's rooms. They're these sunrise lights and they're just shocked at how these kids that were so hard to wake up and they've used these morning alarm clocks where the light comes on gradually and gets brighter and brighter with great success, because I'm a really big believer in peaceful mornings. Not just for an individual, but for a family. And that really does mean how do we get kids to bed on time and how do we help them wake up? If you have kids that aren't waking up, my hunch is the light is a piece of it. That's the first thing of just trying to get light on your body within the first hour, but anytime in that early morning is better than none. The second is to try to incorporate exercise as early as possible. Do you exercise?

Guest: 13:50

No.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 13:51

When I say that, what's your reaction?

Guest: 13:53

That's something that I've been trying to work on. It's just another thing that I really don't have a lot of time for. One of the reasons I'd like to wake up earlier is so that I can exercise in the morning. During the fall I'm in the band and so I'm walking constantly, but I'm also marching, so that's like some moderate exercise to do that for an hour and a half a day. In the spring semester I do need to work out.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 14:15

I want to correct the word moderate. I know a little bit about marching band because one of my kids was a marching band. That is not really moderate exercise. What instrument do you play?

Guest: 14:26

Clarinet.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 14:26

Clarinet. You're holding this thing and you're marching around. It's quite strenuous, correct.

Guest: 14:32

I guess I'm a little modest there. It can be because it's just such a long time.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 14:35

So don't minimize that but marching band practice is probably after classes. Yes. Which again, any exercise is great exercise. Why do you think you don't exercise?

Guest: 14:47

I used to play sports and that was the kind of exercise that I enjoyed. I liked being on a team and I liked having an objective, and now that I'm older the objective of exercise is just to exercise. I get on an elliptical and it's just not something that I really have fun with.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 15:05

Part of what I would encourage you to think about is we do a morning routine, so our whole day is better and I think often there's this impression, especially in college, that if I'm not doing the most brutal, most difficult exercise, it's not worth my time. But to get up and go for a morning walk for 20 or 30 minutes is exercise, and it will really, again, allow your body to lean into the dopamine system. You're going to walk to class, you could walk the long way. If it's a 15-minute walk to class or a 10-minute walk to class, you could just say, I'm going to try to do a big loop and then go to class and try to do a briskly. You've got your backpack on your back, so you're also carrying some weights. The idea is to get your body moving and to do that in a way that feels enjoyable. So that

would be another thing that you could add to your routine. Do you shower in the morning?

Guest: 15:58

No, I shower at night.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 15:59

One of Huberman, suggestions is that when people shower, they actually end their shower with cold water. Have you heard this?

Guest: 16:08

Yes, I have.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 16:09

What have you heard about this?

Guest: 16:11

This is something that I've tried to do once or twice and it was pretty agonizing. I love a warm shower. It totally makes sense and I've also heard it's good for your skin because it closes your pores. But I imagine it, it definitely shocks your system, wakes you up.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 16:24

Yes. That's exactly what it does. It gets your whole adrenal system up and going. I want to say a warm shower at night is also really part of a good evening routine because we want our body temperature to drop at night. Ironically, a warm shower makes the core of our body temperature drop, which is going to help us sleep, and the opposite in the morning. I had a psychiatrist that with every client I had that was depressed, one thing he did was give them a prescription to end their shower with two minutes of cold water and their report back to me was that really helped their mood. All the things we're talking about are to help motivation, but they're also to help mood and they're also to help mental clarity. If you are a person that can get yourself to do the two minutes of cold shower, or if you want a cold plunge and be a hero, those would be a really important part of a morning routine. The last one, you said you drink coffee. How long between when you wake up do you have your first cup of coffee?

Guest: 17:25

Normally Monday, Wednesday, Friday, I get up let's say I get up at eight 30 or eight and then I get ready and then I walk to the dining hall. So that's a half hour after I wake up is when I start drinking coffee. I don't drink a lot. It's less than a cup.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 17:41

His recommendation is that you don't drink coffee for 60 to 90 minutes. He has this really fun video on YouTube that's called The Optimal Morning Routine by Andrew Huberman, and it's one of those where someone's drawing. You're doing 30, which is

probably better than most people. But again, just to think about, maybe you do 45, maybe you do 60, because what it does is it prevents afternoon crashes. Which I could imagine would be helpful for you since your schedule isn't normalized. But because you're a college student, the weekends are always going to get wacky. Have you ever tried that where you've pushed your coffee out?

Guest: 18:19

Yeah. It's more of a schedule thing. unfortunately, I have to have weird regulated meal times.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 18:24

When you think of these four things, trying to get light in the morning, whether it's sunlight or whether it's buying an LED light bulb that you put in one of your desk lamps or something. Trying to add exercise in the morning, trying to figure out cold water shower, but if you shower at night, that may not be possible and your caffeine. Are any of those things that you think you could do?

Guest: 18:51

Yeah, I definitely think that I could exercise in some capacity, especially walking. I love walking. I also think that if I got up earlier, I would have the time to exercise and then after I exercise I would want to shower. And then because of that I would then be waiting 90 minutes before I got my coffee.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 19:10

What do you think gets in the way of getting up earlier in order to do that for you?

Guest: 19:14

For me, I'm pretty greedy with my sleep. I would love to get nine hours of sleep a day. I can function on six or seven.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 19:22

You'd love to have nine. How old are you?

Guest: 19:24

I'm 21.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 19:25

You're 21. Adolescent starts at 12, it ends at 25. We know adolescents need anywhere from seven and a half to nine hours of sleep. You know that you need the higher end. It'd be interesting to see if you were able to do eight and a half and add exercise. You may need less sleep. We do know that when people exercise, you can't exercise and go down to four hours. But most people find that, oh, now that I'm exercising, I'm actually

sleeping maybe 30 minutes less. That may give you time. How much are you on your phone?

Guest: 19:59

I'm pretty good. I think compared to most people my age; I don't have a lot of social media at all. It's not something that I am checking consistently throughout the day. I like to watch YouTube videos and at night I would watch a YouTube video or two or I'd show somebody something funny, I found on my phone. I don't know what the average of screen time is a day, but I do have a setting on my phone that tells me how much screen time I get and usually it's about three hours a day.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 20:26

One thing I like to encourage people to do is, To look at their phone use and decide, oh, I could decrease my phone use by this amount and then put it towards my morning routine. Instead of being on your phone, you might use that time to study or get other tasks done that make it harder for you to get to bed earlier. Have you ever thought of it in that way?

Guest: 20:49

Definitely. Lent is coming up and one of the things I always try to do is limit my screen time.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 20:53

Lent's aspirational time for Catholics. People look at their lives and they say, what would I like to give up? One of the things I encourage people to do is to try to not just stop it at Lent, if you're using something that could be great for the whole year Most people say I don't have time but really when people look at their screen time, you are definitely on the lower end definitely. So, you should have a pat on the back, but if you want a better morning routine, you could still do two hours, which is a lot of time on the phone. And have an hour to put towards morning. Is that realistic?

Guest: 21:27

I think it is realistic. I think that depending on the day, obviously I'm not spending three hours consecutively on my phone. Yeah. But sometimes, I've got a half hour in between classes. I'm going to watch YouTube videos. I've, I feel like I have nothing else to do, but of course I always have something else to do. I think something that would be helpful for me is to bring my work with me throughout the day so that if I have a half hour here and there, I'm doing my work and that way I'm getting things done earlier at night.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 21:52

Part of what Huberman is saying is leaning into the biology so our body is up and going for the day. I want us to finish thinking about our mind and what we do with our mind to prepare for the day. Easier to do the mind if the body's going in the right direction.

You made some reference to preparing your mind for schoolwork during the day. Do you do any other kind of preparation for your mind?

Guest: 22:17

I used to do meditation. I usually pray before I go to bed, but sometimes I'll pray in the morning. I like to think about why I am doing this, I'm a pre-med student and sometimes the days can be pretty stressful, so I like to remind myself that this is going to be worth it and that I'm studying because I want to, as cheesy as it sounds, I want to help people. Something that I learn in class might actually help somebody later down the road. In the morning I like to remind myself, okay, I'm at Notre Dame. I'm really lucky to be here. It's time to make the most of it!

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 22:46

That is awesome. You already have a lot of these pieces in your life, it feels to me like your morning routine is a puzzle, but you haven't put it all on the same table and then really committed yourself to doing the puzzle. I want you to think of it in that way. Again, you are a junior, you're doing pre-med, which is a lot of pressure and a lot of work. But if you think of, oh, my morning routine is a puzzle. We're not looking for perfection here. We're looking for progress. It isn't taking all these ideas and do 'em tomorrow. We do a puzzle one piece at a time and we're intentional and we're thoughtful. Nobody sits down and starts doing a puzzle without intending to sit down and do the puzzle. We open our phones all the time mindlessly. We don't ever do a puzzle mindlessly because the nature of a puzzle asks us to be focused. What I want you to think about is you're doing this mind work but it doesn't seem like it's ritualized. I wonder what it would be like to take 10 minutes in your morning to sit with the intention of what you want for your day. You ground your feet follow your breaths for two or three minutes. Typically, what happens is all the to-dos lists and you'll, be like, oh, I forgot to do this, I forgot to do that. But if you can live through that first two or three minutes and just do the breath work and then go to your heart center and you move to your mind and you really set the intention for the day. Of what do I really want my heart and my mind to be focused on as I move through this day. It becomes something you do every day. Some days you might have the time to sit, other days you do it walking, but it's intentional. It's not oh, I hope I can do it, because it's not adding really any extra time if you do it walking, adding some time if you decide to have it sitting. Does that make sense?

Guest: 24:46

Yes.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 24:47

Have you ever thought of it in that way?

Guest: 24:49

No, I haven't. So, thank you for that insight.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 24:51

The reason why it's helpful to ritualize the mind is because we then become aware of the state of our body. So often we're up and going without really being conscious of how our mind or our body are feeling. But if you sit in the chair and you just take some breaths, you may be like, oh, I do feel very relaxed today. I do feel really renewed. Or you may be, oh I really should have had more sleep last night. It just becomes clearer and that I think helps people be motivated to make their evening routine better so that they can be more optimal with their morning routine. The idea is to create some kind of ritual where you intentionally connect to your mind and then move your mind to where you want it to be throughout the day. How might you do that?

Guest: 25:43

Yeah, I'm definitely a list person. So, I would do this step by step and I would try to make it organized for myself so that I wouldn't necessarily forget anything.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 25:52

You don't want the to-do list to take away from the feeling state that you're really trying to cultivate. Everyone is different. For some people, when they do a to-do list, in the process of preparing their mind, it just makes them anxious and overwhelmed. But if people say, what's the feeling state? Do I want to be a person who moves through the day with a spirit of openness, a spirit of gratefulness, a spirit of I am really engaged. I really want to learn this. One of the hardest parts of college, I think, is to stay curious and engaged and that occurs when somebody has a class they really love. It occurs when they have an outstanding professor, but we can actually train ourselves to be engaged just by saying that's the mental state I want. And playing around with directing our mind. I can remember being in a really boring statistics class in college doing this. I kept tricking myself, I kept following what he said so intensely that it moved me from boredom to engagement. It can be one, two, where you do the to-do list, but I don't want the to-do list to cause a different feeling state. I want you to really focus on how do I want to show up as a person today, no matter how much is on my to-do list. Meditation is everywhere. I say this, probably every third podcast, the hardest skill I have for my clients to step into is meditation. You said you used to meditate. What was your experience when you meditated previously?

Guest: 27:27

It's very difficult if you'd never done it before. I was new to it. I used Headspace. I tried that for a while and then in Compassionate Care and Medicine class, we had a seminar and we discussed meditation, and then one of our homework assignments was to meditate every day. It's difficult for me to just sit there and think unprompted and focus on my breathing because my mind is everywhere. But the guided meditation where someone is speaking to you and is giving you instructions, I breathe in, hold it, breathe out, and think about this, that's, much more doable.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 27:59

I really want you to know you're an excellent meditator. You're thinking that the goal of meditation is to have a mind that is calm and peaceful. Actually, the goal of meditation is just to do it, and whatever state your mind is fine. The latest research shows it's bringing our mind back to our breath that really helps our mind become calmer. Which means that every time we fail and our mind goes off to, oh, did I put the milk away? And we bring it back to our breath, that we're actually really good meditators. One of the hardest parts, I think, is that when we meditate, we realize how busy our minds are. But that's why we do it. We still get incredible benefits, even if our mind is bouncing all over the place and we do it for seven to 10, 11 minutes. That really helps not just our mind in that moment, it helps our mind all day long. More importantly, it helps our sleep. So don't hold yourself to a standard of, I need to be the Dalai Lama, if I'm going to meditate. Nope, it's just meditating and it's great if your mind is bouncing all over the place and in time, people's minds bounce less and less. If you know that guided meditations work really well for you, those are equally as wonderful. What we're doing is teaching our mind that we are managing it. It's not managing us. A really important skill for medicine because medicine is all about managing one's mind. As we wrap up, just share with me what you think you're going to take from the podcast.

Guest: 29:34

I think you've definitely underscored the importance of the fact that your morning routine starts the night before, and that there are things that I can do limiting my screen time, before I go to bed, something that I already do. In terms of waking up earlier in the morning. I definitely can exercise. I have time to do that. That's something that I need to do, and that's something that I think I'd really benefit from. I also think that I really liked what you just said about meditation is that the exercise itself is important that the end goal is not to exist in a perpetual state of having your mind being perfectly blank and at peace. It's almost like exercise for your mind.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 30:11

If you want to walk in the morning and listen to 30 minutes of YouTubes that you would sit and listen to then you haven't even lost your relaxing time. You've actually combined it. Just play around with those because having a morning routine is a life skill that never ends and that we have to be really flexible and adaptive and coherent to do. Thank you so much for being on the podcast today.

Guest: 30:34

Thank you for having me.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: 30:36

Here Are my Inner Challenge Insights for, Oh, want a beautiful morning... routine? Insight number one: Take a minute and look at the picture of your morning routine. Is it fairly peaceful and organized or chaotic and stressful? Think of it like a puzzle. Just a little attention can help you put a piece in the right place. Don't expect to complete overall, just one piece at a time. When that piece is solid, go on to the next piece. Do it with a

friend or a partner. You can hold each other accountable. Insight number two: The foundation of a good morning begins at night. Tuck in your phone, far away from your bedside. Go retro with an alarm clock. Come on, you can do it. The whole world did it forever, prior to 2007. Prioritize getting more sleep. And before you go to sleep, contemplate the value of a beautiful morning. Remind yourself that getting off to a good start lasts all day long. Insight number three: maybe the real trick to a beautiful morning is not how you wake up, but what time you wake your phone up. Once you tuck it in for the night, leave it there until you've done some of your morning routine. Get out of bed, turn on the lights, drink some water, brush your teeth, start your exercise before you wake up your phone. Hey, nothing works harder than our phones. They deserve as much shuteye as we can give them. Insight number four: you might be saying, Hey, MJ, I have kids, or two dogs and a cat, and it's crazy over here. No way can I do any of this and get out the door on time. Really? Try putting dance music on and dance into your kid's room. Turn on their lights as you drink some water. Take your dog for a 10-minute meditative walk. Add 40 seconds of cold water to your shower and hold your coffee for 30 minutes. Remember, you're trying to rev up your body for a good day, and none of these things add much time to your morning routine. Insight. Number five: help your mind and heart sync up with your body. Try to go through your morning routine with a peaceful mindset. Being stressed never makes anyone move faster. Just keep resetting your central nervous system so you are present to the task at hand. At breakfast or on your drive to work or school, ask everyone to check in with their hearts and declare what they want to give to others today: love, humor, attention, kindness. So often we focus on what we have to do. Let's give a little bit of thought to how we want to be. How we deliver Our Do's has a huge effect on our mental state. If your kids get sarcastic when you ask them how they're going to show up for their teachers and classmates, no problem. Just model it for them. You can say, well, I don't know about you, but I'm going to try to be more patient with my coworkers or more engaged with work I'm not all that interested in. If worse comes to worse, ask your dog how he's going to show up for the day. I can guarantee you; you'll get waggy tails and adoring eyes. Then you can say, you are my role model! Insight number five: if you want more information on the topics we discussed today, feel free to listen to episode number eight on self-care. Number nine on sleep, and number 10 on managing your phone. Thanks for listening, and as you wake up this week, get intentional and work on the daily puzzle of your beautiful morning.