

FS NEWS: TV-FREE WEEK edition

Yes, readers,

It's finally here: TV free week May 3rd through 9th! TV-free week started for me on May 3rd 1989 (okay, maybe not on that exact day, but certainly that year). I have not turned a TV on in my home since, but I have turned plenty of TV's off with my "TV-B-Gone" - which can turn off pretty much any TV, up to 100 yards away. The way I see it, TVs in public areas are an obnoxious form of pollution. I've discovered that when I turn the TVs off in public places, no one cares.

According to the TV-Turn Off website, "The average family spends 4-5 hours every day watching TV but only 35 minutes having a meaningful conversation". And what about reading? Doing puzzles, playing games, or simply reflecting on your life? Older readers might remember the bumpersticker, with the image of a zombie youngster, plopped in front of a television, which read "That's Why They Call It Programming".

If quitting TV is not for you, how about playing a game I just made up called 'spot the fallacy'? It's where you look for sly attempts to persuade you and see who can call them out first, such as:

- * music in the background; it's used to incite sympathy, fear, outrage, humor...and the form of persuasion is called Appeal to Emotions because there is no logic, they are preying on your emotions
- * or what about when the news or advertisements use images of children, puppies, tears? That's called the 'Appeal to Pity' and it's used to weaken your resistance to their message.

Vern says that since he's known me, he can no longer accept the shows that he once was able to watch. He can see how he used to look when he watches other people watching TV, soaking in unhealthy subliminal messages about who we could be...but are not. Once we have sight, we can never go back to 'not seeing'.

Neil Postman wrote a book called HOW TO WATCH THE TV NEWS. Here are eight of his recommendations for defensive TV watching:

1. When encountering a news show, you must come with a firm idea of what is important.
2. In preparing to watch a TV news show, keep in mind that it is a 'show'.
3. Never underestimate the power of commercials.
4. Learn something about the economic and political interests of those who run TV stations.
5. Pay special attention to the language of newscasts.
6. Reduce by at least one-third the amount of TV news you watch. (Read the news, too!)
7. Reduce by one third the number of opinions you feel obligated to have.
8. Do whatever you can to get schools interested in teaching children how to watch a TV news show

THANK YOU, LOYAL DONORS for giving me the opportunity to make this 'public service' message! ~ :) Thank you, also, for providing the funding that makes our email conversations possible. I spend at least 20 hours per week. And simply sharing the news, and engaging in the correspondence that follows, costs more than \$400 per month. Our donors not only give us the chance to 'converse' but also to share ideas with each other - such as our reflections on what it means to be authentic - across 2000 miles. This is powerful! And I, for one, am very grateful for this incredibly lucky opportunity.

TOM RESPONDS

Tom Asacker, the author of *The Business of Belief*, was pleased to read your reflections about what it means to be authentic. It has prompted a big email discussion between us and next week we are going to discuss the ideas over the phone. I'm excited and honored that he's willing to talk with me! I do not know Tom; I am simply a big fan of his perspective and writing style.

One of the "sticky points" about thinking errors that we were discussing is the 'fundamental attribution error' (FAE) which basically means this:

If I do something good, it's my fault.

If I do something not good, it is because of circumstances, outside of my control

BUT

If another person does something good, they are lucky!

And if they do something not-good, it is because they are not a good person.

Do you follow me? I had to see it drawn in quadrants to make sense of it.

I emailed Tom with a concern I had about self-imposed limitations. I searched high and low to find this as a 'bias' but came up empty-handed. I explained to Tom that a lot of people say "I can't do what you do" followed by some flimsy excuse to cop out and not even try. I told him that it sounded like the FAE to me, but that people were applying their excuses BEFORE the action, whereas the FAE is usually attributed after the action has occurred. How could it not be a bias when it is so common? I decided to call it the "Preemptive" Fundamental Attribution Error to describe making an excuse for inaction. Tom suggested that I consider it as a "mental model", where we create and/or accept limitations for ourselves that we apply to many situations. I can see his point, but I have seen, and experienced myself, where my excuses are often only situational...when I don't want to do something for lack of courage or to protect my ego.

What do you think? When someone says "I can't rotate my tires because I'm 57 years old" is that a mental model or a 'thinking error'?

BOP HOME CONFINEMENT / CARES ACT MEMO

Rumors have been flying about an April memo from the BOP. I looked all around the internet for a copy of the document, not just stories shared by lawyers and non-profits, and I finally found a copy on the Federal Defenders Services Office Training Division website: https://www.fd.org/sites/default/files/covid19/2021.4.13_-_bop_home_confinement_cares_memo.pdf (we can talk later about what the heck that organization is, anyway....but, in short, it appears to be associated to the US gov.) If you'd like to read the full letter, start a new message to me with MEMO in the subject line and I'll send you the full text!

TRUCK DRIVERS NEEDED!

AP Story: "A lack of qualified truck drivers could lead to a gas shortage as we head into the summer. On Tuesday, CNN reported citing comments from the National Tank Truck Carriers that between 20% and 25% of trucks are parked because there aren't enough qualified truck drivers. Only 10% of truckers were sitting idle at this same time in 2019."

The Fair Shake website has started a page for folks who want to be drivers. It is, of course, in the software, and can be viewed by anyone, anytime with internet access, here: <https://www.fairshake.net/employment-trucking-driving-jobs> .

DEAR FRIENDS ON THE JOURNEY

My name is Jason O'Malley, and I served nine years at FCI McKean, a medium security federal facility in Pennsylvania. I am writing in hopes that I can convince you to make yourself a priority now and as you transition home. It is my hope that you will be intentional about self-care throughout your journey.

Let me back track a little. During my nine years of incarceration, I was super focused on becoming my best self. I became certified as a life coach; I taught mathematics as a GED tutor; and I was deliberate about my spiritual and physical well-being. My schedule was jam-packed with activities that promoted growth and transformation in both myself and others.

When I was released at the end of 2018, I was ready to go. That is until my brother was killed in a car accident in the beginning of 2019. At the time, I was still in the half-way house (and I want even discuss what that was like). I did not allow myself to feel, to grieve. I buried my emotions, and I kept it moving. For a time, I was still on my way to helping build a system of programs to help others transition home with my colleagues who I had done time with. What I had forgotten was that I could not be of any use to anyone else if I didn't take care of myself first. If I wasn't intentional about my self-care through prayer, exercise, good leisure, etc., I would not find the healing I needed to thrive in life. How could I continue to run with vigor for life if I could not breathe from the grief that I would not allow myself to feel? Inevitably, I began to burn out and crash and burn.

Fortunately, I got a handle on things before they spun out of control like they would have when I was younger. And recently, I have begun to reflect on those little nuggets of wisdom that I appreciate for their guidance towards a fulfilled life. One of them being self-care. I implore you to always remember you in your journey with others. It is so easy to get lost in others and in our journey. Please find yourself every day and appreciate yourself by being well. Taking care of yourself is a daily mission that will be rewarded with vitality for your other endeavors. Good luck and God Speed! Take care, Jason

Recipe Of the Month: EASY TREAT!

A few years ago I put out a call for recipes to share. It's time to revisit this! A generous newsletter subscriber shared this recipe which I will use as a primer for you to share your favorite! He offered another which I will include in a list that I'll share as a request option in an upcoming newsletter.

No Bake Peanut Butter Cookies 10 Hersey bars 1/2 jar peanut butter 1 cup oatmeal 3 tsp butter
Combine Hersey bars, peanut butter, and butter in a bowl. Put in microwave until melted Add 1 cup oatmeal
Roll Into balls. Flatten. Let cool. Eat.

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS WRITING OPPORTUNITY!

A group headquartered near Boston is creating "a new national journal of art for **writers and artists impacted by incarceration** called *ReSentencing*. Submissions are due by or before **JUNE 15, 2021** The journal will be printed and mailed to all people whose work is printed and, we hope, to all those who submit work regardless of acceptance status.

ReSentencing Barnam Hall 163 Packard Avenue Medford, MA 02155

SUE K. INTERVIEW

I'm finishing up a written interview that will be available online on the Livin' the Dream blog:

<https://livinthedreamblog.org/> If you would like to read my unedited response, please start a new email to me with INTERVIEW in the subject line and I'll send it to you.

Book recommendation: LIVING WITHOUT THE SCREEN: Causes and Consequences of Life Without Television (2009) by Marina Krmar. The author is a media researcher who studied 120 non-viewers and 83 viewers to find out why they do or do not have a television in their home. Since more than 98% of Americans own and watch a great deal of television and news programs on network and cable channels, and also sit fixatedly in front of an often large and domineering monitor to immerse themselves in movies, streaming videos, and video games, she is concerned with the effects of this influence on our children and on society. In the 1970's it was widely accepted to think of television cynically. This was at a time when stations had a duty to report balanced news and the pharmaceutical industry was not allowed to advertise prescription drugs. With the rapid rise of drug use ("ask your doctor!"), mental illness, fake and grossly misleading 'information' packaged as news, and individuals using violence as an attempt to solve problems, is there any doubt about television's impact on civilization? We do not have to give up television to push back on its hidden messages. Through the reflections and the studies in this small volume, we can better understand how to watch TV so that it doesn't control us. (I also recommend THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE by Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore with art by Shepard Fairey)

Quotes:

I really didn't like TV Turn-off week except I did notice that my grades went up and I was in a good mood all week.
~ 2nd Grader in PA

I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go into the other room and read a book. ~ Groucho Marx

The role of television is the illusion of company, noise. I call it the fifth wall and the second window: the window of illusion. ~ Mumia Abu-Jamal

the media work us over completely ~ Marshall McLuhan

If you believe that your thoughts originate inside your brain, do you also believe that television shows are made inside your television set? ~ Warren Ellis

The media's the most powerful entity on earth...because they control the minds of the masses. ~ Malcolm X

What will you do during TV-free week? I hope you will share your story with me!

To our successful transitions! Ubuntu! ~ sue Fair Shake PO Box 63 Westby, WI 54667

Remember these resources can be found in your phone-gizmo: 2-1-1 AuntBertha.com Fairshake.net HelpYourselfTherapy.com

Newsletters are available at FairShake.net for your family and friends to read or print!