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No More 'Rinse and Repeat'

CREATIVE WAYS TO BREAK UP THE DAILY GRIND

Breakfast, school, work, dinner, rinse, and repeat.

Busy weeknights often leave little room for quality family time. However, with a bit of creativity and intentionality, you can transform even the most hectic evenings into memorable bonding moments. Here are seven engaging, low-prep activities that fit seamlessly into your evening routine.

Screen-Free Time After Dinner

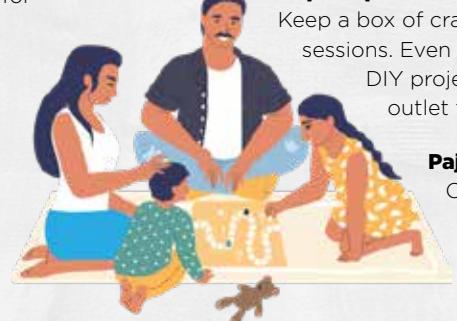
Designate a window of 30-45 minutes after dinner as a screen-free time for the entire family. This intentional time allows for uninterrupted conversations, taking a walk, playing a favorite sport outside, or enjoying each other's company without digital distractions. You can even create a "screen bucket/basket" for everyone's phone or tablet during this designated time.

Ongoing Dinner Board Games

Extend the dinner table experience by introducing a board game that spans multiple nights. You can pause and resume games like Monopoly or Clue over several evenings. It's a great way to stay connected all week long!

Dance Party Snack Break

Inject some energy into your evening by turning snack time into a mini dance party. Play your family's



favorite tunes and let loose together, creating joyful memories and a fun atmosphere.

Living Room Obstacle Course

Use pillows, chairs, and other household items to transform your living room into an obstacle course. This activity encourages physical activity and teamwork, all within the comfort of your home.

Family Storytelling Circle

Gather the family in a circle and take turns adding sentences to a story. This collaborative activity sparks creativity and often results in hilarious and imaginative tales. Talk about memory-making!

Impromptu Craft Sessions

Keep a box of craft supplies handy for on-the-spot art sessions. Even 15 minutes of drawing, coloring, or simple DIY projects can provide a satisfying creative outlet for both kids and adults.

Pajama Walks Under the Moon

On clear nights, consider a short walk around the neighborhood in your pajamas. This simple activity offers fresh air, a change of scenery, and a unique way to end the day together.



JANUARY
2026

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NEW YEAR, NEW MOMENTUM

Inside Our Growth, Goals, and What's Coming Next

2026? Really?

As the year turns its page and we step into the fresh possibilities of January, I find myself reflecting on where we've been and where we're headed. There's something about this time of year that naturally invites a pause, a moment to take stock, reassess, and think about growth. It's that subtle intersection between looking back and looking forward, and I've been doing a lot of that lately.

The start of the year always feels like the perfect opportunity to reevaluate, not just in business, but in life. I've been thinking about maximizing and enjoying the fruits of my labor. At our surgery center, for instance, we've been focusing on fine-tuning operations: improving efficiency, ironing out the inevitable kinks that come with a new space, and ensuring every patient has a seamless, relationship-driven experience. To me, it's all about creating moments where people feel heard, cared for, and empowered.

At the same time, I've been revisiting projects I've done in the past. It's hard to believe it's been 10 years since I wrote the "Mommy Makeover" book. The journey since then has been incredible, filled with lessons, stories, and experiences that go far beyond the surgical techniques themselves, and I'm having a blast updating the book with new insights.

In the first quarter of 2026, I'm excited to release an updated version that explores the emotional aspects of the journey in greater depth. I've spent countless hours listening to my patients, gathering their insights, concerns, hopes, and fears. It's fascinating how much perspective grows when you look back with a decade of experience and realize how much more you understand about people's journeys, both physical and emotional.

While reflecting, I'm also looking outward at what's new and evolving. I'm exploring fresh techniques and procedures, ways to enhance results, and methods to make the process smoother and more personalized. The first quarter will bring exciting releases in that regard, and I'm energized by the idea of blending proven approaches with innovative practices. After all, growth is all about curiosity, openness, and embracing change.



On a more personal note, I've been intentionally thinking about my own growth, physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Journaling, using a Growth Day app, and being more deliberate about planning have become part of my routine. Instead of reacting to the day's demands, I'm trying to act with intention, scheduling meaningful work, quality family time, and moments of reflection. My kids are growing up fast, and I want to make sure I'm present and engaged before they're all out of the house.

Reflection and intention are life strategies. They remind us that whether we're planning a surgery, updating a book, or nurturing relationships, your principles should remain the same: Be thoughtful, be deliberate, and be present. I hope sharing these musings inspires others, my patients, colleagues, and anyone reading, to take a moment to assess where they are, celebrate the progress they've made, and consider the possibilities that lie ahead.

Happy New Year!

-Dr. Mike

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A Noninvasive Path to Healthier Skin

THE PROMISE OF RED LIGHT THERAPY



In skin care, treatments often fall into two extremes: high-tech procedures or overhyped quick fixes. Red light therapy (RLT) sits somewhere in the middle. It's noninvasive, increasingly accessible at home, and backed by growing research. While it won't work miracles overnight, it offers a compelling blend of science and gentleness that's tough to ignore.

How It Works on a Cellular Level

Red light therapy uses low-level wavelengths of red and near-infrared light. Unlike UV rays, these don't damage DNA. Instead, they penetrate below the skin's surface and reach the mitochondria, the energy centers of your cells. By enhancing the way mitochondria process oxygen, RLT gives cells more energy to repair, regenerate, and function optimally.

Boosting Collagen and Elasticity

One of the most talked-about benefits is its effect on collagen, the protein that keeps skin firm and smooth. Over time, collagen

production slows, resulting in sagging and the development of fine lines. Red light encourages fibroblasts, the cells responsible for making collagen and elastin, to ramp up activity. This results in firmer skin, improved elasticity, and a youthful texture.

Calming Inflammation and Improving Circulation

RLT can also reduce inflammation, which affects everything from acne to redness and irritation. By promoting better blood flow, RLT can enable blood to deliver more oxygen and nutrients to skin tissue, supporting healing and repair. This dual effect of calming and nourishment can help skin look healthier and more even-toned.

Supporting Recovery and Skin Clarity

Because of its regenerative boost, red light therapy is often used to support recovery from scarring, sun damage, and even procedures like microneedling. It may also improve overall tone and smoothness by encouraging gentle cellular turnover, without the irritation common with peels or exfoliants.

Things to Keep in Mind

While the evidence is promising, it's not conclusive for every claim. Results depend on consistency, device quality, and treatment parameters such as wavelength and duration. Dermatologists generally see it as a safe, complementary step in a broader skin care routine, not a substitute for essentials like sunscreen or a balanced regimen.

ADDRESSING YOUR OWN COMFORT ISN'T VANITY IT'S SELF-RESPECT

Valentine's Day always stirs up conversations about love, but not just the red roses, chocolates, and dinner reservations kind. I've been thinking a lot about self-love lately, and how this season gives us a chance to focus on taking better care of ourselves. In the office, we were discussing procedures that help people feel more confident, and labiaplasty was mentioned. It's something I'm genuinely passionate about because so many patients come in not for a partner, but for themselves. They want to wear certain clothes comfortably, enjoy activities like biking or horseback riding, or just feel better in yoga pants or certain poses. To me, choosing to address those day-to-day discomforts is a real act of self-love.

I've also been trying to be more intentional with my own health: mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual. As I enter my fifth decade of life, I'm no longer the college football athlete I once was, and I don't need to push myself to lift the heaviest weights or compete as I used to. I'm learning that when I power through everything, I don't give myself the space to reflect or let things go. Like many physicians, I was trained to compartmentalize my thoughts. In residency, there wasn't time to process the tough moments: losing patients, having difficult conversations with families, and facing trauma after trauma. You just kept moving. It works in the moment, but those experiences don't magically disappear. They settle somewhere inside you.



—Dr. Mike

For me, self-love has become about making time to intentionally decompress and reconnect with myself. That usually means getting outside, going for a hike, and spending time in nature. I pray a lot when I'm out there, and sometimes, I'll listen to a podcast or a book I've been meaning to get to. I've also been trying to take better care of my body by eating right, adjusting my workouts, and being kinder to myself overall.

One of the biggest lessons I've learned is that taking time for myself doesn't make me selfish; it actually makes me a better person. When I fill my own tank, physically, emotionally, and spiritually, I'm more present with my patients, staff, kids, and family. I show up stronger. It's taken me a while to accept that. A car doesn't run well when the tank is empty, and neither do I. This year, I'm focusing on being intentional about self-care and remembering that taking care of myself helps me take better care of everyone else.

Being Different Makes Life Interesting Reflections on Peculiar People Day

Jan. 10 is National Peculiar People Day, and honestly, I can't think of a better excuse to celebrate the quirks and odd little habits that make each of us exactly who we are. When I think about peculiarity, I'm reminded of my own strange characteristics: some obvious, a few that are subtle, and a handful that only show up when I'm knee-deep in the operating room. It reminds me of a book my kids read, "Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children," where each child's peculiarity is what makes them special. I may not have a supernatural talent, but I've definitely got my share of quirks that make me ... well, me.

For starters, I'm not a good singer. At all. I can't hold a tune to save my life. But I love changing lyrics and turning them into goofy one-liners, especially when I'm trying to

lighten the mood in the OR. Even so, one of my biggest quirks is that I don't allow others to sing in the operating room unless, of course, they make money off their voice or they're changing up the words for humor. Otherwise, I find it distracting.

I've also realized that some of my peculiarities show up in how particular I am about instruments. When I opened my own surgery center, I tried countless needle drivers, pickups, and other tools. I have to actually hold an instrument to know if I like it. If it feels awkward, it's out. If it's smooth and efficient, it's in. Even with fluids, I insist everything be warmed so the patient doesn't wake up freezing. These little details matter. And maybe that perfectionism is peculiar, but it's part of what makes me a careful surgeon.

Outside the OR, my quirks show up in unexpected places. My office is upstairs, and the clinic is downstairs, and every time I pass through a certain doorway, I intentionally shift my mindset from business mode to patient-care mode. It's like my personal reset button.

And then there are my simple, everyday quirks: I don't like celery. I won't eat tuna salad if it has celery in it. I'm not going to waste time picking it out. Some might call that petty, but hey, I'm peculiar that way!

So, on National Peculiar People Day, I'm celebrating the fact that my quirks shape my work, humor, preferences, and personality. They make me different, and different is what keeps life interesting.

—Dr. Mike

INSPIRATION

"No matter where you are on your journey, that's exactly where you need to be. The next road is always ahead."

—Oprah Winfrey