The RUMERTIME Process: A Framework for Everyday Interactions

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Abstract

The RUMERTIME process is a social-emotional wellness program that can be used in multiple environments. The process takes well known concepts such as recognizing and understanding and combines these ideas into a single coherent framework. The article describes how a mother and daughter used the RUMERTIME process to improve their relationship in simple everyday interactions.

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In June 2018, my husband and I had the scare of our lives. Our ten year old daughter told us she wanted to kill herself. We had no idea what to do. After some discussion, we went to the local mental health care hospital and once evaluated she was accepted into a four week therapeutic day program. Although the program helped us through that moment, if you were to ask us what we learned for the long term, we could not say. The emergency passed, but we nevertheless kept our eyes open for other programs that could support us. We needed something tangible, some kind of framework, some process we could use over and over again for all kinds of situations, not just crisis moments.

By January of 2019, we had found such a program, an upcoming RUMERTIME Social-Emotional Wellness Summer Camp taking place in South Bend, Indiana. Even though we live in Fargo, North Dakota, we decided that we would travel to the camp. We were already familiar with the RUMERTIME process through the work of the creator of the camp, Dr. Yvonne Murray-Larrier, and my husband and I were excited for the opportunity for my daughter and I to participate in the camp developed specifically for school-age children and their parents. Uniquely, children could not participate unless at least one parent also participated.

For ten days in June, eight children and at least one parent for each child were incrementally introduced to the RUMERTIME process. First we learned self-awareness skills through

Recognizing our Thoughts, Interactions, Mindsets and Emotions (TIME), then self-management skills through Understanding our TIME, then relationship management skills through Managing our TIME, then social-awareness skills through Expressing our TIME, and finally responsible decision-making skills through Reflecting on our TIME. The concepts were made accessible using hands-on activities such as planting, yoga, meditations, singing, experiments, journaling, drawing, and playing.

We did not have to wait until the camp was over to start implementing the skills we were learning. Normally when I interact with my daughter, I am easily annoyed. I am liable to raise my voice over the simplest demands and the smallest infractions. During the camp, I began to intentionally recognize my interactions every time. Once in the grocery store, I asked her to get an item and she got the wrong one. I immediately raised my voice, but I was conscious enough to catch myself, and then repeat my request in a calm voice. Recognizing my interactions was enough to get me to slow down and pay attention to my thoughts and emotions and I redirected to a more productive, less stressful response.

On the last day of the summer camp, another incident stood out to me. During my time in South Bend, I bought my daughter a cap, but on the last day, she lost the cap. Typically I would remind her of how much money I had spent on the cap, reiterate how irresponsible I thought she was, and tell her I will never buy her another hat. Although I still felt like saying those things, I understood and expressed to her that I have lost things in the past and I know it does not feel good to lose things you like. Then I offered to help her look for it. Although we never did find the hat, what I found was a productive way to engage, and what she found was a mother willing to empathize.

A grocery store request and a lost hat seem to be such simple incidents, and yet these are the moments that give us opportunities to live with intention and not just blind reliance on old patterns. At the end of the summer camp our family had a framework, something tangible, a process that we have since used over and over for simple and complex situations. As a result we have experienced less stress, more engagement, and more intention. One of the goals of the RUMERTIME process is to move from unconscious living to conscious living and that is exactly what we continue to practice for ourselves and model for our daughter every day.