

EPISODE 053 - OUR EVENING ROUTINE

WITH NANCY RAY

Intro

Before I jump into this episode, I want to share about the crazy idea I've had it in the works. A lot of us have some extra free time that we don't know what to do with right now and we're losing help because we can't plan our summer. We're canceling everything that's been on our calendars and it's just a weird, weird time.

So, my crazy idea is to invite you to take on a project that will give you some purpose and hope, that you've been needing to do for years, I guarantee, during this weird season. The project is learning to organize and enjoy your personal photos. I'll teach you all about it. I'll lead you through it.

The game plan is to start on April 15th at 2:00 PM where I'm going to teach you in a **free online class: How to Organize and Enjoy your Personal Photos**. Just go to nancyray.com/photoclass to sign up.

Now, our quarantine lifts on April 30th (obviously that can all change) but my plan as of now is to teach you in this class, free class, April 15th, to lead you through organizing your physical printed photos the week of April 20th, that next week. And then the following week, the last week in April, I'll lead you through organizing your digital photos.

Now, if you do nothing else, just be sure to sign up for your free seat in my online class on April 15th at 2:00 PM. I'm going to be there live and in person. My co-workers will be there with me, one in a diaper, the other two watching Frozen 2 for the 10th time. It's all good, and there will be a replay if you can't make it live, but just be sure to sign up at nancyray.com/photoclass to grab your seat. I'm going to give you a game plan and I'm really excited about what we're going to cover.

Okay. My first thought when I started recording this episode about our evening routine was this is going to be so boring. Who would want to listen to a random night in the Ray household? But I decided I'm going to power on through and share it anyway, and as I did, I realized, A of all, there may have been little things we've implemented through the years have been really helpful for us that might be helpful for you and, B of all, that I began to grow curious about other people's evening routines too. So maybe this will be interesting to you after all. So that further ado, I'm going to share with you what a typical evening in the Ray household looks like, the three small kids edition.

You're listening to work and play with Nancy Ray, Episode 53.

Much of our daily lives can be divided into two categories: work and play. Simply put, that's where our life and our legacy take place. This is a podcast all about learning to work in play well, which leads to a healthy soul and a fulfilling life.

Let's get to it.

Content

Okay, so I'm going to give you a play by play of what it looks like typically to walk through an evening with us. Now, Will usually gets finished with work and about 5:00 or 5:30, and that's typically when our evening routine starts. He comes in the door and I have already started dinner. Y'all, we eat dinner so early in our house. We eat dinner at 5:15. I remember the days of old, before kids, when we would usually eat dinner at 7:00 or 7:30 or 8:00, and we would sit in front of the TV and watch something, one of our favorite shows or we would sit down at the table and have a nice conversation. Y'all, it is very different these days. So Will gets home at about 5:00. It's crazy, the kids are wild and I am trying to get dinner on the table. And by the time we all sit down and are eating, it's probably about 5:30, and this is when the crazy dinner with three kids happens.

Now, we try and endeavor every night to sit down at our little round table that's just off our kitchen and eat together. So we always start our meal with prayer and we kind of rotate who prays. We usually ask one of the kids if they would like to pray or daddy will pray or mommy will pray, and then we eat together. And most nights, if I'm honest, there's just a lot of interrupting. It's very loud. One or two or sometimes three of the kids end up crying about something, and it's just crazy. It feels like some nights, why do we even do this? It would be way easier to just not, but we do it and some nights we'll have little golden nuggets that we cling too, and we can maybe listen to one of our kids' days or hear their heart. And some nights we just call it a wash and we end up picking up two crying kids halfway through dinner and throw them in the bathtub, and Will and I come back and finish eating later.

So I just want to be very real and honest and say, this is not picture perfect. It's far from it. Usually there's a ton of food on the floor. Usually our Great Dane is close by stealing food off of the high chair of our baby, and it's just hilarious. I really feel like it would be quite entertaining if there was a video streaming of our dinner, our nightly dinners as a family right now. I think that one day we would probably really appreciate looking back on it because it's so, so very loud and so very chaotic. But we try to do a few things every night at dinner, open in prayer, thanking God for the meal and then we just go around and ask each other about our days. And it's so sweet because there's two questions we ask. And Linden, our two year old, is always the one who loves to ask them.

We call her our little conversationalist and she says, "Hi daddy, how was your day?" And so daddy will answer how his day was. He'll say, "It was good Linden." And she goes, "What did you do today?" And those are the two questions we ask, how was your day and what did you

do today, so that each one of us can kind of go around and share a little bit about our days. Sometimes if we're having a hard time getting the kids to talk, we'll do our highs and lows and we'll say what was the best thing about your day, the happiest thing about your day and the saddest part of your day. And Millie, our four year old, is really the only one who can totally answer that. Linden will try, but she doesn't even know really how to answer it or what it means. And it's really funny because her concept of time is really confusing and she usually doesn't talk about her day but she talks about like last week, something that happened.

So it's quite funny and we finish dinner. The kitchen's a total mess usually. And so typically what happens is Will and I will tag team getting the kids upstairs to the bath. We'll both try to get all three of them upstairs in the bath, and then one of us will go down and do kind of a power clean of the kitchen while the other one is bathing the kids, getting them ready for bed. And then whoever is bathing the kids inevitably says, "All right, Babe, I need some backup. Come up here and help me." Because it's just chaotic bathing three kids and brushing teeth and getting them in their jammies and Beaufort's in diapers, and it's just nuts. So the parent who's downstairs cleaning the kitchen will come upstairs and will finish up their bedtime routine. We'll do bath time, potty time, brushing teeth, brushing hair, jammies on, bedtime story, song and a prayer, and that's kind of how it goes. And then their lights are usually out around 7:30.

So I want to pause here and say this whole kid bedtime routine, it's just insanity because they're loud, they want to play, they're pushing your limits. But I just want to share a resource that's been really helpful for me because it used to be that I would lose my mind in frustration at bedtime routine because of how disobedient the kids were, especially a couple of years ago when Millie was little, it was like anything I asked her to do, she'd do the opposite. So one thing that we've done that has been really helpful is we've printed out a picture chart so that even though she doesn't know how to read, she knows the sequence of events that we follow to get into the bed. And then we bring out our Time Timer, which I've talked about before, which is this timer that you could get. It's a visual timer, and we put it on after they get out of the bath so she can tell how much time she has before it's time to have lights out.

And in the early days when it was just really stressful, it was really helpful for her to take ownership of the evening routine and also to see how much time she can have because when she's goofing off and playing when she should be getting on her jammies and getting her teeth brushed and getting dressed, we'll just say, "Millie, look at the time. You're not going to be able to read a book tonight if you don't choose wisely in putting your jammies on. you're not going to be able to sing a song because when this timer is up, lights are out." And that was really helpful, that visual, we still have it hanging in her room.

It's, I think, six little pictures, clip art things that I downloaded off Google, dragged onto a Pages document and printed it out at home. I mean, I just literally Googled, clip art: saying a prayer, clip art: books or whatever, and so she can walk through. I just made it myself and she can look at and it's funny because we'll say potty, check, bath time, check, teeth, check, and so she goes through them all and is watching the timer. I learned about this through Positive Parenting Solutions. I know I've mentioned that course before, but it's an online course that is

really amazing. And this is really funny, but if you get the course... I'll leave a link for it in the show notes. You're going to see me in the course because that's how I got it for the first time.

I knew nothing about it, but I volunteered because they needed some people to help film the course and I said, "Sure, I'll do that." They're like, "We'll give you a free course of it if you volunteer and do this thing." I was very pregnant with Linden, and I signed up for it and I got it, and I did not know how beneficial and helpful this would be for me. And she has this whole extra section within the course. It's an hour long called The Bedtime Blues for parents who really struggle with bedtime. And this is where I learned this principle of the image chart to follow through as well as the Time Timer and all these things, super helpful. She goes into a lot of other details about things to help with bedtime and sleep and kids who get up a lot in the night, all that stuff.

So anyway, I just can't recommend the course enough because of all the ways that it's helped us, but I had to just pause there and say it's not perfect. It's not, they follow it perfectly every night. There's still a lot of running around. They're still tickling. They're still laughing. They're still crying and melting down, but for the most part we're able to get them in bed by 7:30. With our powers combined, me and Will, we're able to get them in bed together. You can also go back and listen to Episode 31, which is my number one parenting tip, which I also got through the Positive Parenting Solutions course, if you're interested in learning a little bit more about that. Okay, now that the kids are in bed, it's about seven 7:30, 7:45, Will and I come down-stairs, finish cleaning the kitchen and tidying up the living room.

One of the things that we do every night while we're cleaning the kitchen that I love as part of my evening routine, and I've mentioned it several times, is the fact that we make coffee the night before. We have this coffee maker that I'm obsessed with. On one side it's a coffee, like a normal carafe coffee maker. The other side, it's a Keurig, so if you want one single hot cup later on in the afternoon you could do that. But we make eight or 10 cups of coffee the night before and then we set the time, the alarm, so that the coffee will automatically start brewing at about 5:00 or :00 AM, depending on when we're waking up. I think this is probably one of the most valuable pieces of our evening routine because there is nothing better to me than waking up and having the coffee hot and ready to go.

So after we clean the kitchen and make our coffee for the morning and we set the timer on it, Will and I just try to touch base with each other. We try to spend a few minutes, quality time together. We ask each other about each other's days, we catch up, we say, "Is there anything that you want to do evening, any projects that you have in mind? What time are you hoping to get in bed?" And we just kind of touch base so that we're on the same page, and a lot of times we'll just share about what happened in each other's days. Because we try to do that at dinner, but like I said, a lot of times dinner is just loud and chaotic so it's really a good time for us to kind of finish up any lucent thoughts that we didn't get to complete at dinner or just share anything else that happened in our day that we wanted to.

At this point we might kind of break away from each other and complete a home project or we

might just start getting ready for bed. A home project would include me working on some family photos or finishing folding laundry. We rarely watch TV during this time during the week, but maybe once or twice a month we will fold laundry and watch a show together. But honestly most of the time we're just busy and we're tired so we just tidy the house. We do a quick project, we fold laundry, we iron clothes for the next day and we just start getting ready for bed. Now, at this point, after we've touched base and the kitchen is clean, the coffee is made, I'll do just a little bit of prep work for my morning routine. So I'll set out my Bible and my journal and a candle and a lighter next to the candle for my morning, and the book that I'm reading. I'll just put it all in my favorite spot on the couch so that it's ready to go.

And honestly, mentally, doing that the night before and knowing that the coffee is going to be ready and waiting for me, it makes me excited to wake up in the morning. And I think that's such a small little piece of wisdom that has helped me through the years just to do small things in your life that get you excited to live life. So as you're winding down and kind of cleaning up your house for the next day, making sure that you have things set out to start your next day strong. So after all of that is set out and ready to go, I usually take a bath. I know that maybe that sounds luxurious, but it's my me time, my sanity. Sometimes I'll take a shower and wash my hair, but if you follow me on Instagram, you know I only wash my hair once or twice a week.

And so the best way for me to just kind of wind down at night is just to take a bath, and I love it. So I'll take a bath, I might read. It's just a great way for me to just kind of calm my body down. I actually learned when I had my third baby, I was having a really hard time falling asleep and getting good sleep at night. And my midwife told me it's really important to just kind of get yourself your own nightly routine and take a bath, take a warm bath, drink some water, turn the lights down low or light a candle and read a book. And do that same thing every night to signal to your body, okay, it's time to go to bed, just like for a kid, which I thought was interesting, but I've gotten in the habit now of just taking a bath every night and I really love it.

So after I'm all clean, I'm in my jammies, every night Will and I go upstairs, all the kids are asleep, we go into their rooms and we kiss them while they're sleeping. This is something that... I don't know, I think we did it a lot in our old house. Our old house was a townhouse and we were all on the same level and it was just easy to pop in the room and check on them. And I thought, "Man, I'm going to miss this when we get in our new house," because in the house we live in now, our master bedroom is on the main floor and then all the kids are upstairs. But it hasn't stopped, and I'm so glad that that tradition hasn't stopped and that part of our routine because every night we go upstairs, we look at them, we lay hands on them, we pray for them, we kiss them, and then we come back downstairs.

And at that point I've got my water, I'm in my jammies ready to go to bed, and I lay down in the bed and I either do a little bit of journaling or I read a book and fall asleep. I would like to say that this happens at about 9:30 or 10:00 every night, but realistically it's probably

about 10:30 or 11:00 that we're in the bed. And I'm trying to work on getting that time consistently between 9:30 and 10:00 so I can get a solid eight hours and wake up at six. And the last thing I'll say about our evening routine is, I try to read something in the evenings that somehow connect my mind back with the Lord. And I think it's easy to have such a strong morning routine and connect with him in the morning and say, "Lord, bless this day. I'm inviting you in. Let's do this. Here's everything I have planned."

But I'm finding it's really important to abide with the Lord throughout my day, walk with him throughout my day. And one of the ways that I can do that all the way up until I fall asleep again is focusing my mind on reading material at night that connects me with him. Now, sometimes if it's a book club book and I'm behind and it's a business book, I am totally fine to just read that. But I found that a lot of times that gets my mind spinning with ideas and things that I want to do, and it gets me dreaming and excited and it's really good for me to just read something that's a little more calming. So one of the things I like to read in the morning and at night for my morning routine and my evening routine is Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Day by Day. That's a mouthful, but it's really good because it has a morning devotional and an evening devotional, and I have really loved that

And since it's time for the Work and Play Cornerstore, I am going to add that book as my book to the Cornerstore today. And again the Cornerstore is just where I recommend something that I use in my own personal life and I recommend to you. So the book I'm loving is Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Day by Day. And the thing I'm going to recommend is my quip toothbrush. It's an electronic toothbrush. You've probably seen it before. It's really beautiful. I know that sounds weird to say about a toothbrush, but it is. It comes in all different metallic shades. You can get rose gold or silver or gold. I think they sell them at Target now. Used to, you could only get them online, but it's an electric toothbrush and it's awesome. I really love it. So I'll be leaving a link to both of those things in the show notes, and I may get a small commission off of some of the items I put in the Cornerstore but it helps me keep this podcast coming to you, so I always appreciate it when you use my links.

Thank you so much for listening to Episode 53 of Work and Play with Nancy Ray.

I hope this evening routine was not totally boring or weird. I don't know. Maybe you're like, "This is so far off, so different from mine," but maybe there is one thing that was encouraging in there to you, and if that's the case, I'll take it. Everything I mentioned today can be found in the show notes at nancyray.com/podcast/53, and you can find me at nancyray.com or follow me at on most social media places, but definitely on Instagram and occasionally Facebook. Here is a quote by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow,

*"Each morning sees some task begun, each evening sees its close.
Something attempted, something done has earned a night's repose."*

Thanks for listening and I'll see you next time.