

The Declarations Quarterly

Winter 2025 | Edition 37



Winter Reading Recommendations

Alexandra Schueler, QA Assistant

With the cold weather rolling in and the snow beginning to fall, what is better than sitting beside the fireplace with a great book? Maybe add some pets, a fluffy blanket, and a (sugarfree!) peppermint mocha latte into the mix and you've just described my perfect day! As an avid reader, here are some of my favorite books with a distinctly wintery vibe to get you through the next frigid months!

1. The Frozen River by Ariel Lawhon
2. A Very Scalzi Christmas by John Scalzi

3. All the Dangerous Things by Stacy Willingham
4. Little Thieves by Margaret Owen
5. The Night Swim by Megan Goldin
6. The Edge of Collapse by Kyla Stone
7. The Perfect Daughter by D.J. Palmer
8. Wrapped Up in You by Talia Hibbert
9. The Bear and the Nightingale by Katherine Arden
10. Beartown by Fredrik Bachman

Book photos retrieved from <https://www.goodreads.com/>

Declarations

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Photo Source: https://stockcake.com/i-cozy-reading-session_1232944_706454



The Importance of Dental Health

Deena Ortiz, RN

We all know that practicing good dental hygiene is important to promote a healthy mouth, teeth and gums by preventing decay and disease. However, good dental hygiene is also extremely important for our overall physical health. Germs that come from our mouth and teeth can have a negative impact on the entire body as lack of proper dental and mouth care can lead to bacteria travelling to other parts of the body including the gastrointestinal tract and respiratory tracts causing disease. Inflammation caused by germs in the mouth can lead to periodontitis. It is also important that those with a weakened immune system and have a history of conditions such as diabetes and HIV/AIDS take particular care of their dental health as it may

be more difficult to fight off infections. Various diseases/conditions can be linked to dental health such as endocarditis, which is an infection in the inner lining of the heart chambers or valves, which can be fatal. Other conditions linked to dental health include cardiovascular disease, pregnancy and birth complications, pneumonia and some cancers. This information may seem scary, but taking preventative measures to ensure good oral health is key in preventing disease. It is important to remember to:

1. Brush your teeth for at least two minutes, twice per day
2. Floss daily
3. Use a fluoride toothpaste and

remember to replace it every 3 to 4 months

4. Follow up with your dentist at least once per year, unless further treatment is advised.
5. Follow up with your dentist if you notice any oral health issues
6. Eat a healthy diet, avoid foods and drinks high in sugar
7. Avoid tobacco products

Taking care of our dental hygiene is vital in helping to keep our entire body healthy and prevent disease. One way to make oral care an easier task is setting reminders, using phone apps/trackers to remember to brush and floss. Treating yourself to a fun new toothbrush or different flavor toothpaste may make dental care more enjoyable!

Source: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/dental/art-20047475>

Photo Source: https://st4.depositphotos.com/1003924/22852/i/450/depositphotos_228522712-stock-photo-white-healthy-tooth-different-tools.jpg

Overcoming the Winter Blues

Daria Sbraccia, Franklin Team Leader 1

Throughout the season, it is typical for us to experience 'winter blues' and slowly let ourselves forget the daily parts of our routine. A lot of people may experience a lack of energy due to the cold weather and decreased involvement in activities we enjoy (i.e., exercising at the gym, going for walks, having trouble eating healthy, etc.). Although we may forget to prioritize these parts of ourselves during the winter season, it is important to try and stick to these habits so we can feel better about ourselves rather than starting all over come Spring. A blog published by VeryWellMind and written by Sara Lindberg specifically states that it is beneficial to incorporate certain daily activities, such as exercising for 30-60 minutes (can be aerobic, yoga, etc.), making sure to get daily doses of sunshine (Vitamin D!), or trying the 10x10x10 plan (2023) to help maintain a routine exercise routine. For example, if you typically work out for 30 minutes per day but are struggling with the motivation to do so, instead, you can split the exercise up in three 10-minute exercise sessions. Remember to focus on yourself and keep making progress on those personal goals you set and always tell yourself: "you got this!"

If you are interested in reading the blog, I have included the link for your viewing: [How to Beat the Winter Blues](#)

SIX TIPS TO COMBAT THE "WINTER BLUES"



Stay active!



Eat healthy!



Stay social



**Use lights to
mimic sunshine**



Have fun!

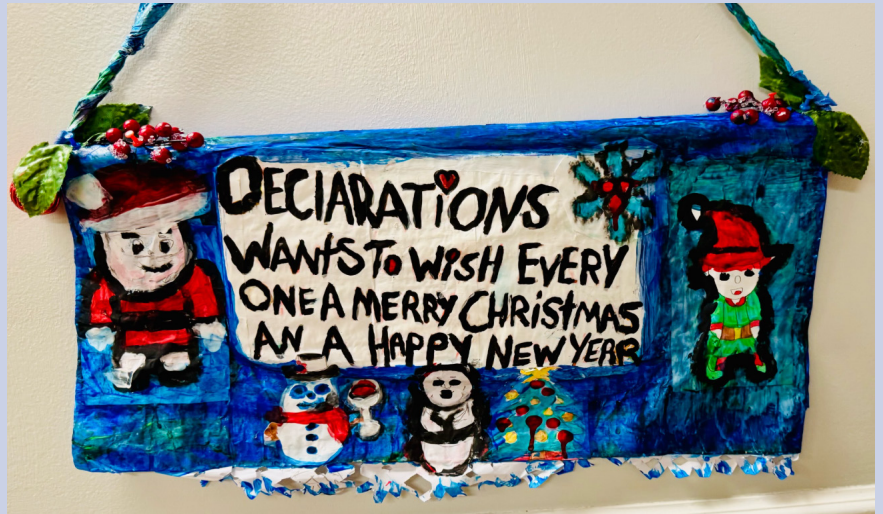


**Open up about
your feelings**

Consumer Holiday Party

Alexandra Schueler, QA Assistant

On 12/19/24, Declarations hosted a holiday party for consumers and staff at The Elks Lodge in Freehold. The event saw a great turnout with consumers able to socialize and mingle, as well as enjoy delicious food and participate in holiday crafts. With a collection of holiday music to enjoy, the event was full of holiday cheer! Thank you so much to all of the staff members who made this event possible!



Consumer Holiday Party, cont'd



National Human Trafficking Prevention Month

Andrea Guzman, Franklin Life Coach 1

January is National Human Trafficking Prevention Month. With an estimated 27.6 million people subject to human trafficking around the world, there are steps we can take to ensure our community and loved ones are safe (National Human Trafficking Prevention Month - United States Department of State, 2024). Our first step is to understand the complex issue that is human trafficking, which involves the “Use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act” (What Is Human Trafficking? | Homeland Security, n.d.). Victims of trafficking are manipulated or deceived by false promises concerning love and stability and are lured to work for little or no pay. A common misconception is that victims are transferred across states or borders, which is not always the case. Victims can be trafficked even in their homes by partners or family members using manipulation and their relationship with the victim to receive labor. Human trafficking can take place anywhere, in the home, at the workplace or within your community, which is why it is critical to understand the warning signs and potential red flags. Common signs of trafficking include lacking personal possessions, appearing submissive and coached, signs of being denied basic needs (food, water, medical care), and disconnection from loved ones (Indicators of Human Trafficking | Homeland Security, n.d.). It is important to note that not all indicators are present in every human trafficking situation. These images below describe indicators to look out for when identifying human trafficking, along with the various types of abuse that can happen within labor and sex trafficking situations. More information concerning human trafficking and how to stay involved is available on <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en>.

IDENTIFYING HUMAN TRAFFICKING – ASK YOURSELF:

- Is the victim in possession of their own identification and travel documents?
- Is the victim coached on what to say to community members, workers, law enforcement or immigration officials? Does someone else communicate for the victim?
- Is the victim recruited for one purpose but forced to engage in other work?
- Are the victim’s wages being unlawfully garnished to pay off a debt or fee? (Paying off a smuggling fee alone is not considered trafficking.)
- Is the victim forced to perform commercial sex acts?
- Has the victim or their family been threatened with harm if they attempt to leave?
- Has the victim been threatened with deportation or criminal charges?
- Has the victim been harmed, deprived of food, water, sleep, medical care, or other life necessities?
- Is the victim free to contact friends or family without being coached or monitored?
- Is the victim under the age of 18 and engaged in commercial sex?
- Is the victim living in substandard housing?

BC-IC-ENG 12/21

National Human Trafficking Prevention Month, cont'd



Sources:

<https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/indicators-human-trafficking>
<https://www.state.gov/national-human-trafficking-prevention-month/>
<https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/what-human-trafficking>

Photo Sources:

<https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/materials/indicator-card>
<https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/resources/human-trafficking-power-and-control-wheel>

New Year's Resolutions

Reflect, Refresh, and Prepare: Tips for a Strong Start in the New Year

Alessandra LoGrande, Franklin Life Coach 1

It's that time of year again when we reflect on the past 12 months – celebrating accomplishments and lessons learned while also looking ahead to the future. As the year draws to a close, there's often a sense of urgency to finish strong. But remember, it's okay if you haven't achieved everything you planned. There's a brand new year waiting for you to set new goals and start fresh. Here are some ideas to inspire your plans for the new year:

1. Reflect on your wins (big and small)

The end of the year is the perfect time to pause and acknowledge everything you've accomplished. Whether it's personal growth, professional milestones or unexpected victories, take a moment to appreciate the progress you've made. Not everything needs to be a grand success to count.

How to reflect:

- Make a list of your top achievements this year
- Celebrate even the small wins – they're all part of the journey
- Reflect on lessons learned from challenges or setbacks

2. Reevaluate your goals and set new intentions

If you haven't achieved everything you hoped this year, don't stress. The beauty of a new year is the opportunity to realign your goal. Break them down into manageable, measurable steps and give yourself the flexibility to evolve.

How to set new goals:

- Break down big goals into smaller, achievable actions
- Set SMART goals (Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound)
- Don't forget to include personal growth, wellness, and creativity in your goals.

3. Prioritize your well-being

A successful year isn't just about career achievements – it's about maintaining balance. Take the time to prioritize your health and mental well-being and remember that self-care is just as important as meeting your goals.

How to stay balanced:

- Commit to a regular exercise or physical activity you enjoy
- Practice mindfulness or meditation to reduce stress
- Set boundaries between work and personal life

4. Focus on learning and growth

The new year is the perfect time to invest in yourself. Whether it's developing a new skill, advancing your career, or gaining new knowledge, learning should always be a priority.

How to continue growing:

- Commit to reading more books (set a goal for the number of books to read)
- Take up a new hobby or online course
- Network and build relationships with people who inspire you



New Year's Resolutions, cont'd

5. Stay accountable and on track

It's easy to lose sight of your goals amidst the hustle and bustle of daily life. Staying accountable is key to maintaining focus and momentum. Whether it's checking in with a friend, using apps to track progress, or joining a community group, find what works for you.

How to stay accountable:

- Share your goals with a friend for regular check-ins
- Use goal-setting apps or planners to track progress
- Celebrate milestones along the way, even if they are small

As we enter the new year, remember that it's okay to move at your own pace and adjust as needed. The important thing is that you're setting intentions, staying true to yourself, and looking ahead with optimism. Here's to a year full of new opportunities, growth, and success!

Sources:

<https://www.mindtools.com/a8lm,h20/new-year-resolutions>

<https://greatist.com/happiness/new-year-goal-setting#Takeaway>

<https://www.shannaahocking.com/blog/besttimetosetyourgoals#:~:text=January%20often%20seems%20theyear%20before%20you%20move%20forward.>

Photo Source: https://www.freepik.com/premium-vector/new-year-s-goals-concept-with-paper-sheet-wooden-table-decorated-with-gift-box-christmas-tree-branches-garland-lights_10651863.htm#fromView=keyword&page=1&position=19&uuid=dad7075d-8332-4b96-b42d-062430cb7e65

5 Lessons from the Wacky World of Hypnotherapy

Joseph Russoniello, Adams Life Coach 1



Some recent events have caused me to return to my roots in a way, and pick back up my study of hypnotherapy. An often misunderstood practice, hypnosis is ultimately a practice wherein one enters into a state in which they are more open to suggestion. And the aim of hypnotherapy is to utilize this state to give suggestions meant to enhance one's mental or physical well-being. As I dust off my old notebooks, I decided to share a few bullet points from those archives that anyone can use even if they have no desire of utilizing hypnotherapy in their own journey.

1. "You do the drills, you get the skills." A large part of what Declarations does is skill-teaching. Everyone wants to learn skills that they can use to bring their lives more joy, more success, more recognition, etc. Other times, though, it's about less stress, or maybe less disappointment in our own behaviors. Whatever the goal, we need to get beyond our misconception that once we know about a skill, we're set to use it with ease. Because if we're operating with that mindset, we'll find out quickly that it's more difficult than we thought. This leads people to move onto some other skill, or pick up another book, and repeat the process. The real answer, of course, is to make the drill until it becomes instinctive.



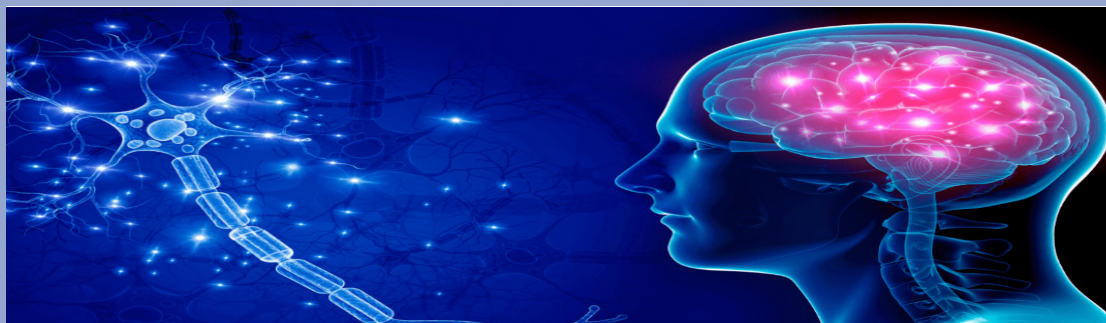
5 Lessons from the Wacky World of Hypnotherapy, cont'd

2. “There’s the thoughts you’re aware of, and the thoughts you’re not aware of.” We can say that this is the essence of any psychology practice. Creating immediate change often deals with surface-level changes: waking up earlier, eating healthier, being more kind to the people around you. These things are important, and done enough over time can impact us at a deeper level. But getting at the root cause of why we find ourselves practicing unhealthy habits is how we may begin to fundamentally change who we are. One hypnotherapy technique is called The Grey Room. In this technique, one enters trance and is directed into a grey-colored room with papers on the wall and a fire in the middle. The entranced individual looks at the papers on the wall which are representative of unpleasant memories. The individual rips up the paper and tosses it into the fire. As the process continues, general negativity is released, even if one isn’t fully aware of what is on the papers.

3. “When you change you, everyone around you changes too.” The idea speaks to the importance of maintaining control over who you are. And when it comes to the idea of frame control, it’s essential to the position of a hypnotherapist. In a hypnotherapy session, abnormal reactions or heavy emotions may come up. The hypnotherapist needs to remain in control of their own state in that moment, because the only thing worse than one person panicking is two people panicking. Most of us will never be in that position, but will we encounter others going through a stressful situation? Probably. And will maintaining our composure help the situation? Probably.

4. “Never lose your playfulness.” Anything can happen – on the job, at school, in a hypnotherapy session, in life. Staying playful puts you in a state to come up with more inventive solutions. I recall a particular drill in my early hypnosis education wherein the fellow student I had in trance presented an unexpected barrier. Remembering to stay playful allowed me to create a solution to the barrier that brought us to a satisfactory close to the exercise.

5. “Everything is just a suggestion.” What we see, hear, smell, touch, and taste become the inputs to what we feel. But these inputs are all suggestions - we have control in determining how that input is processed. For example, think of something that someone once said to you that made you feel not-so-great. Now play those words in your mind, but with Mickey Mouse’s voice. Tweaking that one aspect of the input likely changed how you felt about it, and you can expand on this in endless ways. Play around with this idea and tell me what you come up with!



Source: Identify by Design seminar, presented by Action Performance Care in Solana Beach, California

Photo Sources: <https://hypnotc.com/how-does-hypnotherapy-work/>
<https://mymind.org/what-is-hypnotherapy>
<https://www.newlife-therapy.co.uk/what-is-hypnotherapy-and-how-can-it-help-you/>

Wintery Wonders

R H Y Q D S B S N S R S I S R
 M A S Q E O M N T N J Q H L U
 A T H U C C S O I O R L F E S
 S S O E E U Z W W W H T C D Z
 N B V L M B Z B D D C B Q D S
 O L E C B O X O C A H I F I L
 W A L E E O G A O Y I A K N E
 B N J N R T L R F P L C W G E
 A K F S H S O D F C L O B J T
 L E R K S I V I E S Y A N F L
 L T O I L W E N E N R T J D H
 X V Z I U B S G Q O M V L X K
 Q U E N S T G K T W U E A Y T
 K D N G H T F I R E P L A C E
 P X P S N O W M A N W A H D B

Snowboarding

Fireplace

Snowball

Coat

Sledding

December

Snow Day

Hat

Snowman

Shovel

Skiing

Coffee

Blanket

Gloves

Boots

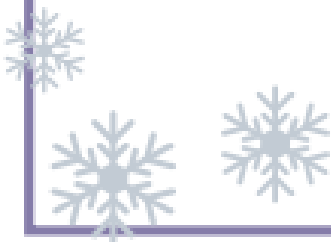
Sleet

Snow

Frozen

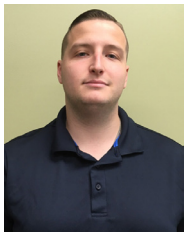
Chilly

Slush





Staff Spotlight On...



All Life Coaches and Team Leaders

Accomplishment/Reason for Spotlight: Just wanted to shout out all of our exceptional life coaches and team leaders! Over the past several months, the agency and program(s) have been through so many different changes. Not only was it observed that all of you have jumped right on board with the changes, there was never a moment these changes impacted service provision for the individuals we serve. Whether you were part of training and onboarding our two new Life Coaches (Andrea & Kaitlyn), or jumping in to fill in the coverage gaps during our period of staffing changes. This exemplifies how your impact goes beyond the consumers we serve—it inspires your colleagues, strengthens the community we serve, and elevates the mission of Declarations'. The agency is so lucky to have such smart and dedicated group of individuals. We look forward to watching you continue to adapt and grow daily in the field of mental health in the New Year!

Submitted by: Shauna Fontenelli, Clinical Program Director

Staff Spotlight On...



Joseph Russoniello

Adams Life Coach 1

Accomplishment/Reason for Spotlight: I've had the pleasure of working with Joe over the past year and a half, from shadowing to today—and enjoying all the funky shirts and socks along the way. It's been inspiring to watch Joe grow professionally, make a positive impact on consumers' lives, and be a valuable part of the Adams team. Recently, Joe played a key role in facilitating a consumer move and supporting new referrals. Thank you, Joe, for all that you do!

Submitted by: Alicia Greaney, Adams Team Leader 1

Staff Spotlight On...



Michael Wilmot

Assistant Director of Clinical Services

Accomplishment/Reason for Spotlight: Since Mike's induction onto the Declarations Team in 2023, he has tried on and completely "rocked" many varied hats. Mike has accepted each assignment willing and enthusiastically. He not only "filled in" and maintained the essential functions of the role but he also greatly enhanced and utilized his immense skills to improve the service. It appears that Mike's talents, knowledge and commitment are endless. Mike constantly offers innovate ways to improve the services of Declarations and improve the quality of life for our consumers. Mike has approached each challenge as a professional, displaying enduring qualities of character. We can only look forward more exciting innovations and positive interventions from Mike for hopefully many years to come.

Submitted by: William Hodgdon, Clinical Director

Staff Spotlight On...



Kaitlyn Beard & Andrea Guzman

Sherman Life Coach 1 & Franklin Life Coach 1

Accomplishment/Reason for Spotlight: Since their start at Declarations, Inc., I had the opportunity to spend quality training time with some of our newest life coaches, Andrea and Kaitlin. Both individuals presented engaged and dedicated to their training to absorb as much as possible, arriving with their own unique, transferrable skills setting them up for success in their role as life coaches. It's most critical to highlight their motivation to make progress and ask questions. Further, their positive communication skills helped them effortlessly build rapport with consumers and fellow staff members. With support of fellow life coaches, Kaitlin and Andrea both took the initiative to solidify the food donations needed for the holiday party in such an efficient and dedicated manner. Most importantly, they have their own unique personalities and are very approachable. If you have not gotten to know either staff member, I encourage you do for some good laughs and conversation. They are both very funny!

Submitted by: Allison Turnbach, Operational Program Director

Staff Spotlight On...



Carly Halpin

Jefferson Life Coach 1

Accomplishment/Reason for Spotlight: Carly's thoughtfulness and ability to always help out when needed is one of the many reasons why she deserves this spotlight shout out. Go Carly!

Submitted by: Alessandra LoGrande, Franklin Life Coach 1



Staff Spotlight On...



Kaitlyn Beard

Sherman Life Coach 1

Accomplishment/Reason for Spotlight: Kaitlyn has been a great addition to the entire Declarations team since joining the agency. She has jumped right in demonstrating her passion and is always willing to help both in team and cross program to provide the best support to our consumers.

Submitted by: Quinn Olsen, Sherman Team Leader 1



Staff Spotlight On...



Alessandra LoGrande

Franklin Life Coach 1

Accomplishment/Reason for Spotlight: Ale demonstrates a level of commitment to her work that makes her stand out as the rock star of life coaches. The daily challenges of the job never seem to bother Ale. Instead, she ends every day with a smile, and motivated to do it all again the next day. She's patient, she's kind, a real hoot in the break room, and always the best-dressed. Her new role on Franklin makes that team a force to be reckoned with and a strong contender for the House Cup. But Harry Potter references aside, we're all grateful to have Ale making an impact with our agency.

Additional Comments: Did you know: When put under a microscope, Ale's DNA is actually fusilli pasta. This is a fact.

Submitted by: Joseph Russoniello, Adams Life Coach 1

Wintery Wonders

R H Y Q D S B S N S R S I S R
M A S Q E O M N T N J Q H L U
A T H U C C S O I O R L F E S
S S O E E U Z W W W H T C D Z
N B V L M B Z B D D C B Q D S
O L E C B O X O C A H I F I L
W A L E E O G A O Y I A K N E
B N J N R T L R F P L C W G E
A K F S H S O D F C L O B J T
L R K S I V I E S Y A N F L
L T O I L W E N E N R T J D H
X V Z I U B S G Q O M V L X K
Q U E N S T G K T W U E A Y T
K D N G H T F I R E P L A C E
P X P S N O W M A N W A H D B

Snowboarding

Fireplace

Snowball

Coat

Sledding

December

Snow Day

Hat

Snowman

Shovel

Skiing

Coffee

Blanket

Gloves

Boots

Sleet

Snow

Frozen

Chilly

Slush



Wonderful Winter Celebrations

Alexandra Schueler, QA Assistant



Join us in celebrating the following winter milestones:

January	February	March
<p>Kaitlyn Beard - 1/20</p>	<p><i>Birthdays</i> Daria Sbraccia - 2/1 Alicia Greaney - 2/6 Deena Ortiz - 2/8 Lisa Schneider - 2/27</p>	<p>Alexandra Schueler - 3/6 Kerri Eger - 3/18</p>
<p><i>Work Anniversaries</i></p>		
<p>Kerri Eger - 1/12/09 - 16 yrs Alicia Greaney - 1/18/22 - 3 yrs</p>	<p>James Marhold - 2/26/03 - 22 yrs</p>	<p>Jennifer Beattie - 3/26/12 - 13 yrs</p>
<p><i>Other Updates:</i></p> <p>Jennifer Beattie and her husband welcomed a new addition to their family on 10/6/24! Welcome to the world Kaylee Rose and congratulations Jen & Jim!</p> <p>Alexandra Schueler and her husband announced their pregnancy! They are expecting a baby boy in July 2025. Congratulations Alex & Rob!</p> <p>The agency welcomed the following staff: Kaitlyn Beard, Sherman Life Coach 1 (October 2024); Andrea Guzman, Franklin Life Coach 1 (November 2024); Returning staff member: Camryn LaSala, Adams Life Coach 1 (January 2025)</p>		

Photo Source: <https://www.todayparent.com/family/activities/50-essential-winter-activities/>