Taking a Step Back

A realization that I needed to incorporate self-care to be healthy once again.

November 15, 2019 By Aundaray Guess

I looked at the last time I posted my most recent blog and was not surprised to see it has been a while. During the past few months, I had to adapt some self-care measures and step back from aspects of my life in order to take an inventory. That included looking in on my medical needs, mental and physical needs and finally my relationships. In other words, I had to give myself a tune-up.

The first thing that started me on my self-care journey was that during the past summer I learned I had high blood pressure, also called hypertension. I suspected I had it because whenever I went for any medical check-up my blood pressure readings were always high. Although I felt fine and wasn't experiencing any symptoms, I saw a cardiologist, and it was confirmed. There's a reason it's called a silent killer as there is no tell-tale sign one has it and left unmanaged it could result in an unexpected stroke or worse, death.

I've always felt the one advantage of living with HIV was the fact that it forces me to interact more with doctors while managing my condition. This results in identifying early medical issues and the promotion of prevention measures. One such visit also identified to me that I was pre-diabetic. Again I did not notice any symptoms and I felt I was a healthy person—I was going to the gym five days a week and watching my diet by not eating junk or fast food. Yet the strike against me was that despite the care I gave myself, I was dealing with conditions that ran in my family.

As I was dealing with my new illness, I also started to notice the shifting of long-term friendships. The friends I used to see on a regular basis, I now saw more irregularly. I never took it personally as life sometimes changes priorities and sometimes as we age, our circle of associates gets smaller. Yet I also noticed I was doing more of the work in keeping the relationships going. It seriously felt like a chore. I decided to stop doing it. The sadness of changing relations with friends was a trigger for me as it reminded me of the abandonment of my own family and the rejection I've experienced from them for many years.

Although I was familiar with the signs, it became clear to me that I was suffering from depression. It didn't help that I damaged my wrist which limited my weightlifting regimen, a tool I used to stay positive. So everything all came together as a perfect storm, and as I took it all in I had to call a time out.

I had to develop a strategy to put all my needs first even if it appeared selfish. I had to also be

honest with myself and make some hard choices about certain relationships and tell myself that although our relationship has changed, I'll always be here. But I'm no longer extending myself out if it's not reciprocal. Finally, I had to be upfront with my employer. The reality is that for me to put in place a good medical plan, I would need to make several trips to medical professionals, some who would need to see me during the workday. I'm fortunate in that I have a supportive work environment and they know about my status and need for care. Many don't have that luxury.

Things have now seemed to settle. I've finally gotten my blood pressure to safe levels. I went on a keto-lite, low-carb diet and am no longer pre-diabetic. My hand has healed, so I'm back to the gym. And finally, I'm now seeing a therapist and have been prescribed Zoloft. With this in place, I feel I have regained control of my life.

By taking a step back, I feel I'm now prepared to once again move forward and be the great person I know I can be! So here's to my health and more of me doing me!

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.poz.com/blog/taking-step-back