

How I Overcame with Illness, Depression & Addiction

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Mikes Health & Recovery.pdf

NOTE: This document was written nearly three years ago. Since then, my health and well-being have continued to improve. I've modified the routines and practices described below and added new ones.

I realize that it is poorly written. If I ever choose to publish this document, then I will bring it up to date and rewrite it in first person (that is, coming from myself) instead of sounding preachy, like it does now.

1. Purpose of this Document

Hello Friends,

This is the story of my life my health from 2016 to present. Specifically, recovering from untreated diabetes and depression that jarred my life starting in 2012. (Which came first?... the diabetes or the depression. Does it really matter?)

I'm writing this because I have many friends who are depressed, sick or addicted who have asked me for advice. I feel I have unique insight in these areas and would like to share my experiences, successes and failures. (I learn from my mistakes, so I know I'm the smartest person in the world!) I was never addicted to drugs, but I was certainly addicted to a very unhealthy lifestyle; one that was very unsustainable and would have certainly led to an early death.

I also feel some satisfaction from doing this and anything that makes me feel better is a good thing. It doesn't matter the source of the satisfaction, it only matters that it makes me happy. (A lot more about this later.)

For my purpose here, I am interchanging the words depression, illness, addiction and grief. For me, all healing starts with many of the same changes in priorities, habits and routines. If you are indeed depressed, and even getting out of bed seems impossible, then let me say... congratulations. The fact that you are reading this is a big step in the right direction. (This will come in handy when we talk about tonight's homework!)

In truth, there are probably other things I should be doing. But I feel very motivated to do this because if someone had told me about these things earlier, it would've saved a lot of time, money and frustration – and cut my recovery in over half from 5 years to under 2.

It's my hope that by writing this, I might be able to share information that I've learned, things that have worked, things that I wish I had learned earlier and things that I would have done differently.

I see many doctors. They all are smart and they have greatest intentions. They certainly know the medical aspects of diabetes and my body, but that's only 1/3 of the solution. From my experience, I've learned that there are even more critical aspects of getting healthy that are not discussed by the medical establishment. These factors include developing new habits, following healthy routines and changing your attitude and outlook, being a part of different communities and so on. [Update: expand based on current progress.]

Here are a few notes about this document:

- I don't know everything and always learning. More on this later.
- If there's something that someone else can explain better, then I'll refer you to those resources.
- I would love to hear your feedback including requests for more detail about any of this.

Do I always follow my own advice? Fuck No! Who the hell follows their own advice? But, by taking notes writing things down and reminding myself of what I'm supposed to do, I've been doing the right thing more often than not.

Face, it... we're all getting old!

If there's any consolation in any of this - diabetes or not - as we all get older, we need to take more care of our bodies. As a diabetic, everything that I need to do to stay healthy is stuff that I should do anyway as I get older. I will live much longer and healthier life as long as I stick to doing what's in these pages.

2. Managing my Health

Nobody's going to be more concerned about your body than you. You have to resign yourself to the fact that you need to take more responsibility in managing your health. You need to be an advocate for you. You cannot rely on the medical establishment to make decisions for you. You need to take control of your health.

- Keep your medical records organized. I have a file folder system to hold all my medical papers, blood tests, med sheets, contact info, billing info.
- Know your prescription names the dosages and when you need to take them.
- Understand your healthcare plan, what's covered, what's not, options, opportunities, additional resources, etc.

Join a Few Communities

We all know the importance of being part of different communities. Talking to people, making them laugh, learning from them, getting calls and texts all dopamine, which in turn makes us feel better. I talk to everyone. Yes everyone. I strike up conversations in the grocery line, elevators, on the bus, hiking, even in doctors' offices. Yap, there's no one I won't talk to. Needless to say, my kids are terrified to go out in public with me.

It may be is considered unusual to strike up a conversation with a stranger in a doctor's office - but every time I strike up a convo with someone, they can't stop talking. Many most people who are severely depressed and not active in a community are crying out for meaningful relationships. Just listen to their problems or share some special enlightened wisdom that explains the meaning of the universe. You'll be surprised what strangers will talk about.

I start by complementing them about something, or just saying something stupid, which seems to come very easy to me. For the past 2 years, I've been making a conscious effort to talk less about me and more about others. Interestingly, I've learned that I'm pretty popular when I don't say anything.

Be a part of something bigger

I have much more energy when I'm doing something that I like – or being a part of a larger project. I confess that writing these documents has inspired me in some ways.

Communicating with your team

I typically have about 4-6 doctors working with me at any time. By 'doctors' I mean anyone on my team (primary care physician, diabetes specialist, pharmacologist, physical therapist, psychologist, psychiatrist and homeopath).

- We're all logged into the Providence network which is accessible from anywhere. Your healthcare provider may have a similar type program. I strongly suggest that you learn and use these resources.
- It's a convenient way for my entire team to communicate with the same up-to-date information.
- The staff graphs my blood test results over time and records my blood sugar levels from my meter to look for patterns and trends.

Talking to your Doctors

Everyone says they like their doctor - but no doctor knows everything. Rather than seeing the same doctors each time, I found it important to get opinions from as many different people as possible.

I never missed an opportunity to talk to someone new. I learn something new from every conversation that I have. With a \$5.00 co-pay, I'm happy to talk to anyone who has some advice to give.

- I have a bad memory, so I've learned to record or write down anything that I would like to remember. This was a very important habit that I needed to learn. I always have on me a phone for dictating and a paper copy of my task list. I like to see all my tasks and projects distilled on one single page. I keep this list and a pen with me at all times.
- I always keep a running list of issues and questions for my health team. This is another reason why this document is important. My entire health team can be on the same page regarding my history, prescriptions, blood test results, exams and so on.
- When I'm at the doctor's office, I'll never remember everything that I want to talk to them about so this list is critical.
- Finally, I ask the same questions to different people and ask questions that I think I already think that I know the answers to.

How I Overcame Needle-phobia

Even since I was a little troublemaker, I had a terrible phobia with needles. Whenever I had a blood test or shot, I would often need to be given smelling salts (which, by the way, really work!) But I knew that as I got older, I would be poked a lot more often. When I was diagnosed with diabetes, I knew that I was in for a nightmare.

I am fascinated by the subject of quantum physics. Do you know that you are 99.9999999% empty space? If an atom is the size of the earth, then the nucleus would be the size of a baseball. That means that everything is virtually empty space and nothing actually touches each other. We are essentially Swiss cheese.

From this, I realized that the needle never really touches my body. It goes through my body. Once I understood this, my entire phobia of needles disappeared... instantly. This is a good example of how you can control the meanings of the events in your life. As I always say, quality of life is not determined by the events you experience, but rather by the stories that you make those events mean to you.

3. My Health Situation: Past and Present

To give you some context of my experiences, here is a brief timeline of my health situation.

PAST

On March 14, 2016, I went to see my doctor for extreme brain fog, constant urination, diminish eyesight, and loss of feeling in legs and feet. Doctor took blood sample and reported that I was extremely diabetic and belonged in a hospital. I was not taking care of myself because I was severely depressed. In the beginning, I thought that this was due to depression, but now I know that the depression was caused by the untreated diabetes beginning in 2010.

Here are the numbers:

	<u>Start</u>	<u>Lowest so far</u> (no injections)	<u>Update</u> → April 26, 2021 (w/ injections.)
A1C	14.7	6.8	6.9
Glucose	418	148	151

- My recovery was very slow in the beginning. In my first year of treatment, my brain fog was still debilitating. My brain didn't click on till late in the evening – if at all. So, making good decisions was not easy – including calling doctors whose offices close early. It would take me a month to contact my doctors.
- I improved about 1% per month. That may not sound like much. But I assure you, when your brain goes from 0% to 1% functionality, that's a doubling of my brain's capacity to think. But, once everything started to come together, my health began to improve exponentially.

I was always tired. Here are the major milestones that helped me overcome my energy issues.

1. Being able to sleep for the first time in 2016 helped me not be a zombie the next day (I'll talk about how, later)
2. Aderhold. After 6 months, I no longer needed it, but it really helped me in the beginning of my recovery. I wish I was taking this sooner. (I was also given testosterone injections for a few months, but I didn't see any change in health whatsoever.)
3. In 2018, I have a huge warehouse project that forced me to get active. And, during the last 3 years, there was always a huge project with a tight deadline to incentivize me to get active.

What's worse is that all 3 aspects of myself were broke. I suppose that I can loosely call these mind, body and soul.

- My body I had no energy at all. With terrible blood circulation and inactivity, it was hard to get out of bed and move around. It was literally painful to walk.
- My Brain With no oxygen or sugars getting to my brain, I was unable to think or focus.

- Drive Motivation, initiative, attitude... It's all the same. Without the ability to think, I had no ability to anything except sit on my front porch staring at my cul-de-sac and thinking of revenge to the people who took advantage of my situation. (More on revenge below.)

This was clearly the biggest problem that I faced. If you have one aspect of your life not working, the other 2 can help pull you out of your situation. But with nothing working, there was little hope. In hindsight, my biggest disadvantage was that I live alone with no housemate to keep me accountable, girlfriend to harass me or, even more helpful, a pet. I can understand why people with pets live happier, healthier lives.

PRESENT

My current health situation is excellent or at least excellent compared to what it was 3 1/2 years ago.

My body is beginning to repair itself. As soon as I began taking my meds, my eyesight improved dramatically, and I was no longer peeing like a river. There are no long-term ramifications on any of my organs and because I don't internalize stress, my blood pressure and heartbeat are fine. Also note that all these changes were made without having any insulin injections.

One specific health issue that seems to be common is neurotherapy. This is when you get shooting, sharp pain in your legs and feet very randomly. It's quite painful and prevents you from getting a good night sleep. My neuropathy was so bad that even if I took 15 gabapentins, the pain was unbearable. I hadn't slept in years. Then one day (on the first day at Burning Man) I met a guy from Greece who had to leave in just 3 days. So together, we bicycled for two days straight. On the 3rd day, he flew back to Greece... and I passed out from all the exercise.

My blood hadn't pimped like that in 5 years. I could feel it flowing through my veins. As a result, I was able to sleep comfortably with no pain for the first time in 5 years. (I'm quite sure that I was the only person in Black Rock City sleeping that night!) Since then, I've had very little neuropathy. But, as a precaution, I take one gabapentin before I head to sleep so that a random shot of pain won't interfere with my sleep.

Though my blood circulation has improved, it's still not perfect. Since I'm outdoors quite a bit, I tend to get many mosquito bites, cuts and scratches on my bottom of my legs. With diabetes (and as we get older), feet don't heal as fast. So, I need to teach myself not to scratch or re-open wounds. I also keep in my backpack a strong anti-itch cream, Neosporin and band-aids.

The increased blood circulation has had the side effect of accelerated hair and nail growth. I've had the increase cutting my nails from once a year to 4 times a year. Now, I just have to get my hair to grow back after having teenagers.

Here are my current priorities: follow this routine, create more urgency to finish my work and find new reasons to be happy. I'm currently listening to all of Joe Dispenza's audio books. (You can download audio books for free at the public library online.) I am also going to study spontaneous regeneration. I'll let you know how it goes. Everything else has worked thus far... so who knows.

4. Always Learning

Don't consider yourself having a bad day... think of it as a learning day. Technology changes, medical advancements change - so something that might be true today may not be true tomorrow - and options available today may not have been available yesterday.

I recommend taking a diabetes course every few years. It may be required by insurance company when you originally get diagnosed. The class was great, but I learned more the 2nd time I took the class. Here are some things that I'm always trying to learn.

Tips tricks

Lifestyle changes

Technology advancements

Recipes

Tips for a healthy lifestyle

Your own personal stories

Here's just one from googles of tips. Did you know that your body travels 4 inches at every heartbeat? If you're suffering from neuropathy (random sharp pains throughout your body), just breathe heavy for about 1 minute. The increased oxygen in your blood will get to all your cells and the pain will stop. (Not a solution that's good for big pharma or political campaigns.)

I didn't figure all this out by myself. I learned a long time ago to listen to people who know more than me. This means exposing myself to new and different information - even if it means contradicting something I may have already believed. (My biggest frustration with people is that they're not open to new ideas and possibilities. They live in their little cold worlds with blindfolds on.)

5. Being Prepared

Managing diabetes successfully involves learning and adopting lifestyle changes. You need to be organized and plan ahead. You can't just run out of the house to run an errand. You always need to have certain things with you, like meds and water, since something could always come up while you're out.

Sometimes, I get very tired very quickly. So, to deal with this, I set up a mattress in the back of my car so I can take a quick 30 min power nap. I'm far more productive when I'm out of my house, so I don't want to need to keep driving home every time I need something.

- My backpack contains everything that I need to live for a few days. This takes planning, but it's necessary for my unique lifestyle.
- I keep a very detailed task list. I can't survive without it. Tasks are divided into categories: 'brain's working', 'brain's not working', 'vegetable'. Sometimes I do better when I'm focusing on 1-2 huge projects (like this and my death doc) - and sometimes I just want to bang out lots of little shit.
- I give myself incentives to encourage me to finish projects... I'll treat myself to this... if I do this.
- If there's something I'm supposed to do and not motivated to do it, I'll do something else that I don't want to do, but just not as bad So, in the end all that's left is the one really shitty project that I started with. Once that's done, then all my crap is done.

6. Personal Mindset

For the longest time, I thought that I could just change from depression to passion overnight. In hindsight, this was one of my first big mistakes. Change needs to be a process of moving from one better feeling emotion to another. My original plan was to get healthy first, then focus on being happy - as if being happy is dependent on the events surrounding my life.

When I was down to my last \$2.50, I bought a poster from eBay. It says, "Everything is energy and that's all there is to it. Match the frequency of the reality you want, and you cannot help but get that reality. It can be no other way. This is not philosophy. This is physics."

Some people think that the law of attraction is a form of religion. It is not. Who said the statement above? A priest? A religious scholar? Al Bundy? No... it was from an obscure scientist who was bad at math, Albert Einstein. But whatever you call it, it's all the same.

- Albert Einstein calls it "frequency."
- Joe Dispenza calls it "energy."
- Abraham Hicks calls it "vibration."

I could write volumes about the law of attraction, but I can't explain it better than these people. I urge you to listen to these folks on YouTube. There are also many excellent Ted Talks that are too many to list. Start with the Ted Talk by Dr. Elie Crum. She explains this better than I can.

Most of today's greatest breakthroughs are in the field on quantum mechanics and how thought alters matter and therefore our reality. Personally, I've learned not to react to the circumstances and events around me. (It only took me 30 years of living in Oregon to undo the programming in my first 30 years in Boston and NYC!)

Breaking Synaptic Pathways (fancy way of saying 'breaking bad habits to create change')

Healing from any illness involves changing the way you were doing things. It's your past behaviors that got you in this mess in the first place. I know that I needed to change my personal trajectory. But without thinking about it, I instinctively changed almost everything about me (let me check... Whew!). I changed my name, sold my Jeep, shaved my head, closed a business, sold a business and opened a business, reset my lifestyle and routines. At the time, I didn't know how important these changes were. But looking back, it was the best thing I could've done. (I wish they taught this shit in school.)

Get Happy

In order to recover, there was one thing that needed to happen. Without this one thing, everything else will not work. It is the most simplest thing, yet the most difficult. If I had known about this myself, my recovery would've been cut by a full year. I know it's going to sound crazy, but here I go...

I needed to be happy.

They say the most important thing in life is your health, but they don't tell you that the most important thing about your health is to be happy. Seriously, that's it. But WHY is this so important? Your thoughts, attitudes and outlook directly affect your physical body. I needed to change my mindset. Stress and negative thoughts are like a virus. They spread, take over your body and weaken your immune system. I highly recommend that you watch this Ted talk by Dr. Elie Crum.

One technique I use is changing the meanings of the events in my life. Pick stories that put you in a better mood. For example, just think of all the benefits of having diabetes, like getting through TSA with a water bottle, getting a free refrigerator in your hotel room and discovering the best hospital cafeterias. It's almost worth having diabetes!

So, at this point, you might be thinking... You can't just choose to be happy!

Why this is so hard

Give yourself permission to be happy. This all may sound easy, but here's why this was so hard. First of all, you're sick. What's happy about that? The day you learn you have diabetes is not the best day in your life. You're not "in the zone" on the day you found out you have cancer.

Secondly, since you're sick, you're probably defocused, unmotivated and depressed - so as a result, you're probably not working much and not making much as you'd like. You probably owe people a lot of money and let people around you down and didn't follow through on promises. Not to mention that other people might be suffering or, if least, affected by your current situation and behavior.

So.... what gives you the right to be happy? If you were happy, you'd be filled with guilt. Why do I get to be happy when nobody else is? What an incredible selfish asshole! Don't you care about what other people are going through? How can you be happy when everyone around you is not!

If you want to get better (and thereby help those around you get better also), you need to be selfish. You heard me right. You need to look after yourself first. Only by getting yourself better, can you help others. It does you no good to stay in a constant state of depression because depression is not going to help you get better from any illness or addiction.

7. How to Raise your Energy, Frequency, Vibration or whatever else you want to call it.

There are said to be 22 levels of emotions. This material is from Abraham Hicks , "Ask and It is Given". For the record, I was skeptical of Abraham Hicks because, like many other people, I never believed in 'channeling'. But then I learned that they are not 'channeling". Instead, they are interpreting vibrations which fits perfectly into my understanding of quantum physics and the universe.

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| 1. Gratitude / Freedom / Love | 12. Disappointment |
| 2. Passion | 13. Doubt |
| 3. Enthusiasm / Happiness | 14. Worry |
| 4. Positive Expectation / Belief | 15. Blame |
| 5. Optimism | 16. Discouragement |
| 6. Hopefulness | 17. Anger |
| 7. Satisfaction – Contentment | 18. Revenge |
| 8. Boredom | 19. Hatred/Rage |
| 9. Pessimism | 20. Jealousy |
| 10. Frustration / Impatience | 21. Insecurity / Guilt / Unworthiness |
| 11. Overwhelment | 22. Fear / Depression / Powerlessness |

Many people who are feeling good will counsel you against a better feeling emotion from where you're at. Notice that revenge and hatred are better feeling emotions than some of the worse ones. If you're hopeless and unmotivated, anything that gets you off your butt is a better feeling emotion. For me, revenge is an effective feeling to get me up and moving. Of course, if your mind is in a good place, these feelings would be a step backwards.

Many people try to give advice - they don't know what it's like to be in your shoes. They'll say, "Oh, you got to read this book" or "watch this video"... but you can't even muster the energy to get out up and take a pee.

Being Happy is a Choice

Focus on things that make you happy. It's just that simple. Early in my recovery, I didn't know how important this was. All I knew was that I felt better when I did things that made me happy. My biggest go-to's were watching videos of my kids when they were young and innocent, cute puppy videos and redneck fails. Here are some other things that I do (and recommend to others) to increase endorphins and dopamine to move up the emotional scale.

General

- Be aware of your thoughts and feelings. When you catch yourself feeling down, focus on something positive or even nothing at all (watch a dog, study a flower up close, view a sunset... just Stop Thinking!)
- Do not think about anything bad. If a negative thought enters my brain, I change what I'm thinking.
- End all relationships that are toxic or negative.
- Learn how to ignore emotionally any emotions or feelings as a result of anyone or anything around you.
- Don't avoid dealing with difficult issues, i.e., if you get collection calls then take their call and explain your situation. People are super understanding when you're trying to get back on your feet.

Specific

- Hang pictures of things you like all around your home / bedroom / car of friends, family, vacations, trips... wherever. Hang photos of places that you've been to that make you feel happy.
- Create a playlist of your favorite motivational songs. Include whatever corny, upbeat songs. I plan to upload my playlist.
- Watch YouTube videos of anything that make you smile. Don't watch anything that brings you down.
- Get a pet (sometimes I hang out at a local shelter to hang with me peeps).
- Take a walk, hang with friends, garden, send me money.
- Wear a top hat.

Most important, I don't lament or get frustrated when I do something wrong. Instead, I focus on everything else that I did right that day. Nothing affects my health more than my attitude... and most important is going to sleep happy and content.

[Add text about less stress and low blood pressure. Brothers had strokes. My likely cause of death would be heart attack due to high blood pressure.]

8. The 6 Things I Do Each Day

There are 6 things that I try to do every day. These are listed below. The more I do these things, the healthier I get. For me, life is either spiraling up or spiraling down. When one thing goes wrong, it starts a chain reaction.

- If I don't stretch, my back starts to hurt.
- My back hurts, so I'm not as physical.
- Lack of exercise increases neuropathic pain in my body.
- This prevents me from getting a good night sleep.
- This causes me to be a zombie the next day. You get the point.

Diabetes is all about cause and effect. Managing it is about understanding that everything that you do (or don't do) has a ramification. This is why I need to stick to my routine.

- I prepare my surroundings to support my new lifestyle. I make it hard to do things that are bad for me. I don't have sweets or illegal drugs in my house.
- The opposite is also true. Have things that are good for me easily available (I have a great tip about water below).
- I try hard to notice any changes in my health. Whenever I feel a change, I try to determine what variable had changed in my daily activities which may have caused the change. I try not to change more than one thing at a time so I can tell how that change affected my body. If you change a few things at the same time, it will be hard to know what it was that caused the change in my body.
- I do a lot of testing, for example, I know that when I take of a specific med, my blood sugar level is lowered by 30 points. If I forget to take a metformin the night before, then I wake up with little pillows under my toes. I'm curious if other people experience this.

My recovery was very slow at the beginning. I didn't have anyone to help me or rely on me or keep me accountable. It was just the royal we... me, myself and I... and none of us were getting along. So, for the entire first year, I basically tried to perform items 1-3. To help me stay on track, there are six things that I try to do each day. When I do all six things, my life keeps spiraling up. These suggestions are specific to diabetes, but they are just as important for depression, addiction and grief.

The Importance of Excellent Blood Flow

Diabetes causes your blood to become very thick and syrupy. This prevents oxygen and sugars to get to the cells in your body, particularly to the brain. This is why many people with diabetes get neuropathy and brain fog. This was my biggest problem. So, I needed to do whatever we could to thin my blood and get it moving. Most of these activities help improve blood circulation, but mostly the first 3... stretching, diet and water.

1. Stretch

Stretching helps pull the ligaments so that the blood flows better through my veins.

- I am constantly stretching my feet, ankles and toes. I stretch whenever I'm waiting or standing in line – anytime and anywhere.
- I love the feeling of walking on coarse sand and pebbles (rocks, not Barney's daughter.)
- Sometimes, I throw rope or power cords on my floor. Then, as I walk around my feet are getting a constant deep tissue massage. My whole body feels better when I stimulate and strengthen my feet. The nerve cells for all your internal organs terminate at the bottom of your feet. This is known as reflexology.
- I noticed a big improvement very quickly when I started stretching my feet and ankles. All the blood in your feet are forced through a small channel. By stretching my hamstrings and ankles, my feet are breathing again.
- I try every product that has a chance of working. I keep the ones I like, and I return the ones I don't. One product that works exceptionally well is a powered, deep tissue foot massager. You sleep your feet into two slots, and it is surprisingly strong. I looked for the brand, but it only says, Made in China.
- I also use a spikey foot massage roller. It's very spikey and feels great when the spikes dig under my toes. It does an exceptional job at stimulating blood flow (and thus feeling) in my toes. I use it while sitting on the couch, talking on the phone, hanging at the beach. I'll even use it in movie theaters, during dinners and long meetings. (I think I'll get it now.)

For me, these two products were essential in increasing feeling, muscles and overall circulation. If I had known of these products sooner, I would have saved a fortune in foot massages during my first year of recovery.

2. Drink water

Drinking water is critical to helping thin your blood. If water is easy to access, you'll drink more. To make it easy to drink water, I have lots of water available. I fill up at about 10 used soda bottles with water. I put 5 in the fridge and 5 on the counter. Instead of wasting time and effort dealing with water bottles, now I just grab a bottle as I'm running out, watching TV, gardening or whatever.

- Have a full glass of water each time you take a pill.
- Many stores and public places now provide fountains to fill water bottles.
- Do not buy water. Most water the US is fine to drink. It is the biggest waste of money around.

3. Take meds at the right times

If you're like me, you pop a lot of pills. (All my best friends are drug dealers.) So that I don't get confused about what I took, I use a pill container. It's divided between am meds and pm meds. One compartment is used for misc pills that I only need once in a while.

I highly recommend taking omega-3 fish oil. I take the gummy bears. I would take any med that comes as a gummy bear. With some meds, I can see a difference and in some cases I cannot - but not taking omega-3 gummy bears is something that I definitely notice. But, because it's not a prescribed med, I don't always remember to take it.

4. Eat right

This is a big category and there are many good resources about this online. But one valuable tip though is that spicy foods can thin your blood.

- Red peppers have a chemical called Capsaicin that has many medical benefits. I add it whatever I can.
- I keep a bottle of crushed garlic in my fridge. I dab a teaspoon into everything.

I visit my grocery store every day for lunch or dinner. I don't keep much food in my house because, well... I'll eat it! But I really enjoy grocery shopping. In the first year, it was the only place I could walk since I could use the cart as a walker. Now, I'm on a first name basis with the entire staff (this is one of my communities).

- I like trying new products and recipes. I live alone, so when I make something, I can have it for a few days. (Eventually, it will get up on its own and walk out of the house.)
- If I have a superpower, it's finding best ways to cut fruits and vegetables. People visit from all over the world to see how I cut up food. I love to snack all day, but I can't eat too much. So, I cut my food up into tiny pieces (I cut up apples like French fries and ice cream sandwiches into tiny tasty ice cream bites.)
- I learned how to eat. For example, if I have a craving for thin-mint girl scout cookie, then I'll have a tablespoon of peanut butter. The carbs and protein will counteract the sugars in the cookie.

- This might be off-topic, but I know how to use my microwave. Don't settle with poorly heated foods (i.e., for bread of any kind (including pizza) use power level 6. Keep the lid on tight and include a damp paper towel. Now, tell me that's not better!)
- I keep a posted note next to my oven with notes on how long to cook certain foods. This way, I never have to keep checking on it and it comes out perfect every time.

5. Exercise

In terms of my body, I need to get my blood pumping as much as possible. If I don't exercise for 2 - 3 days in a row, then the shooting pain begins to return.

- I've been working on an enormous landscape project. After digging out dozens of sprinkler heads in hard clay soil, I'm now healthier than I've been in 10 years... breathing clean fresh air right off the Pacific coast, listening to old school R&B (there's nothing like KC and the Sunshine Band to get your juices flow'n.)
- Last winter, I went hiking each day in the cold and rain. I exercise more when I have a specific goal, so I track my path on my iPhone and try to beat my best numbers each time I'm out.
- I love listening to audio books while driving or hiking. Not only does it help pass the time, but nowadays, they're narrated in a way that makes them sound riveting. I especially like listening to books from my favorite movies. The bottom line is that I don't think of this time as 'hiking', I think of it as 'listening to an audio book.' For me, it turns a chore into an activity that I enjoy doing.
- When I'm unmotivated to do a project, I break it down into smaller steps. Let's say I know I should take a hike (something I hear a lot), but I'm too lazy. I tell myself that I'll just drive to the trail head. Once there, I'd seem like a total loser if I returned directly back home.

I incorporate exercise into my daily life, for example:

- I lift grocery bags over my head as I walk back to my car and do bicep curls with paint cans.
- I'd rather not back up in parking lots. I much rather just drive through - but to do this, you need to park further away. Well, since I need to walk more anyway, the extra few steps is a double benefit.

6. **Developed and follow my personal sleep routine.**

It took me about two years before I understood the importance of sleep. Sure, everyone thinks they sleep good but that's not what I'm talking about. (I learned some of this by googling how to sleep.)

- I make sure that I don't drink water a few hours before I plan to sleep.
- I turn down my thermostat to 64°. It's much easier to sleep in colder temps.
- I put on something funny on the television as I get ready – lately it's been It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia.
- I rollup blankets like body pillows and put them on each side of my bed.
- I open up the window in my bedroom and listen to the night noises of crickets, frogs, the wind and the rain – and occasionally trains in the distance and, my favorite, howling coyotes.
- I take one gabapentin as a precautionary measure to prevent any shooting pain that would wake me up or just interfere with my deep sleep cycle.
- I put on lightweight pajamas with lightweight socks and a T-shirt. I tuck my PJ's into my socks because I hate the feeling when your pajamas ride up on your legs in bed.

- I fall asleep listening to a guided mediation on YouTube. My favorites are Abraham Hicks and Joe Dispenza. Currently, I'm listening to the audio for one of his books in my car. You can download almost anything for free from the library. (I'm on hold to borrow a sewing machine).
- I do some full-body stretches, and once in a while, I'll fall asleep listening to something on my phone, sounds of a rain forest, ocean waves, the clickety-clack of trains in the distance.

Focus on the positive

This is most important. Before I go to sleep, I think about all the positive things that happened today. Something that I can feel good about. I don't let negative thoughts enter my mind. It may sound like a waste of time, but this little first step will have a profound effect on your mindset the next day. There are a few reasons why this is true, but it doesn't matter. In the words of some small sneaker company down the street, just do it.

Your homework assignment tonight is very simple. Just think about one thing that you did today that was good, upbeat and positive. In fact, this is pretty easy for tonight... since just by reading this story, you already took a better direction. Focus on feelings of gratitude and happiness and when a negative thought enters your mind, just think of something positive or fun. I like to think about the toilet paper stuck to Trumps shoe.

Does all this work for me? Yes, but it wasn't easy figuring all this out. I had serious setbacks. Early in my recovery, it was one step forward and 2 steps back. Today, I have less bad days, not only because I know what to do – but I know with complete certainty that I'll be even healthier in the next plateau... a step back is just another day in the journey.

I hope this info was helpful. If so, let me know. If folks are interested, I'm happy to provide more details, like updates, tips (and more homework!) For now, we can talk through Facebook. I'm the only Mike Jingoian. (Thank god, right?)

I welcome all ideas and suggestions. I wish you the best of health. I welcome your thoughts and comments... (unless, of course, I don't agree with them!)

Thank you for reading.
Mike (Gozian) Jingoian

PS: Here's where I spend my time. I welcome like-minded folks who want to be part of our pleasant little team.

- Reset America - A plan to abolish our two-party system
- My Stories - Beautifully bound Memoirs to pass on
- AngelCore - Award-winning Explainer Sales Videos

With much gratitude.