

Trying to Find my Stride Part Two

April 20th, 2019

Part one of this post really dealt with the negative parts of the last year or so of my life. The good news is that there have also been some positives from this mess. I've learned an awful lot about myself, and some of these learning experiences have been tough to learn. However, I am a believer that disappointments and tough lessons can absolutely make a person wiser. This is a direct conclusion to the previous post:

<https://youraverageblake.home.blog/2019/04/07/trying-to-find-my-stride-part-one/>

One of my biggest obstacles has been to try and change the way in which I'm extremely critical and tough on myself. Like I said before, there is no obvious reason for this. I think there's something easy about feeling that way towards yourself. If you watch television or go just about anywhere on the internet, you will be bombarded with advertisements trying to point out flaws for both men and women. In fact, recently I was driving through Peoria, IL and had to stop at a light. While sitting there, I looked ahead and saw a billboard with a "picturesque" woman on it, and it was an advertisement for botox. The point is that even driving around in your everyday life, you can come across reminders of what the average man or woman should strive to be. When you're critical of yourself, this can have large ramifications.

The positive side of this came for me when I made that realization that I didn't like where I was physically. A few years ago, something clicked in me where I found the determination to stop thinking about it, and started to take it seriously. Years ago, I weighed 240 lbs. Now, I weigh around 145. The good news is that I've been able to achieve this in a healthy way while sidestepping a lot of the BS and misinformation that exists out there. The starting point was making changes and shifts in how I ate and the amounts that I ate. Running, biking, and lifting weights have been other methods of changing my appearance. At times, I've had to tone things back a bit. I enjoy trying to physically push myself, but it can also be easy to push a little too hard.

I'm happy with the progress I've made thus far, and I feel much healthier than I used to. However, I've still got more work to do as I'm not where I ultimately

want to be. Finding a few motivations has been a huge key for me. Whether it is motivations in relationships and my personal life, or possible professional opportunities, I need to keep that motivation to push myself closer to those goals. In recent months, with my anxiety becoming a little worse at times, I had lost that motivation to exercise. I'm happy to say that I am getting back to exercising again, and have possibly found a new motivation to continue pushing myself.

Trying to figure out my path as far as jobs and careers go has been without a doubt, the largest source of my anxiety and the issues that come with it. The good news is that I've learned a lot while going through this process. When you're applying to tons of jobs and looking through hundreds and eventually thousands of listings, you develop a quick sense to know what to look for and avoid. Employers often use a lot of common buzzwords and phrases that you'll see repeated over and over again, and sometimes they'll fluff up the job descriptions too. Often, I see the same repeated personality and character traits that are sought after. They're looking for an individual with "a strong positive attitude, a good sense of humor, strong verbal and written communication, etc." I could go on listing more traits of the ever-elusive perfect person. What I find odd about these personality and character traits is that there is no way whatsoever to show or prove these to any employer without them sitting you down for an interview.

There are other questionable tactics used as well. Sometimes entry-level jobs require five years of professional experience (I've seen this numerous times) which means that job really isn't entry-level at all, and sometimes jobs are listed in categories that have nothing to do with that job. I had a job interview about a year ago for a marketing position in Peoria, IL. After I interviewed a second time, I was told by the guy that the job was basically mine if I wanted it. However, after that second interview, I found that the day to day aspects of the job were nothing like the initial job description on Indeed's website. In fact, the job description was an extremely vague and generic description. I've never had any doubts or regrets after declining that job offer. The ultimate point is that there is a *lot* to watch out for when looking for jobs/careers, and I'm much wiser now than I was a year ago. There's plenty of weird, illogical, and sometimes borderline shady signs that I have to keep in mind when making these searches.

Another area where I've learned some good lessons is in dealing with friendships. Whether it is relatively new friendships I've made in the last few years, or longtime friendships that go back fifteen to twenty years or longer, it has become much clearer to me what leads me to form those friendships. I can speak with more confidence now about which friendships are strong and solid. Before, I spoke about what I usually put into friendships as far as loyalty and being there for friends when I can be. If someone is nice to me and shows me respect, that's really all it takes for me to view them as a friend. So the friendships that I know today are good and solid are the ones where I feel like that respect goes both ways and that person has my back in the same way that I try to have his or hers. Those instances where one person is the one to initiate conversations and put effort towards that friendship, well . . . that's not really a friendship. As mentioned previously, I've learned this lesson the tough way a few times. In today's world, with Facebook and other forms of social media, it takes such a small amount of time and effort to make a friendly gesture towards someone.

While going through a lengthy period of time where anxiety and stress became second nature, there are many negative footprints left in someone's day to day life. The good news is that some valuable lessons can be learned that way. Nobody wants to learn through disappointment or bad experiences, but good can come from it. Channeling my frustration and stress into getting myself healthier is unquestionably a good thing moving forward. I've become much smarter about looking for new jobs/careers and what to look for and what to avoid. Interactions and time spent with friends and family are things that I appreciate more now.

In times of disappointment, I used to take the approach of putting that entirely on myself. I must have done something wrong and must be at fault. This is a mindset that I've had to change. Occasionally, I'll apply to a job in which I feel I'd be a perfect fit and have the qualifications and skills they're looking for . . . and then I never hear back at all from that employer. Too many times with this result, I've gone down the route of self-doubt and wonder what I did wrong with the application or questions I answered. My thinking has needed to adapt to where I can see that maybe that just wasn't the right fit for me, and that I presented myself as well as possible and it doesn't always boil down to me making mistakes. Similarly, those past instances of letting girls know how I felt about them that resulted in those friendships suffering or falling apart completely were viewed the same way. Clearly, I did something wrong and was

at fault for how things ended up. I now don't automatically think this way anymore. It's not fair to myself to put that all on me. Thankfully, as I'm changing how I view myself, it's changing how I view others. Those girls in question both played a huge role in what happened. I would have to be and have allowed myself to be a bit of a pushover at times, to my own detriment.

While as of today, I'm still not free of the "perfect storm" of anxiety that I detailed in part one of this post. I am lucky that I have a strong understanding of what exactly will lead to me being free of it. A lot of people struggle with this and don't know how to get out of it. In the midst of this, it's been great to get strong support from family and friends, and really learn more about which friendships are going to be strong going forwards. Some good has come through all of this. My physical health is in a better place, whether employers or people, I can more effectively spot those red flags, and I'm learning that when things don't go my way, it's not always just on me.