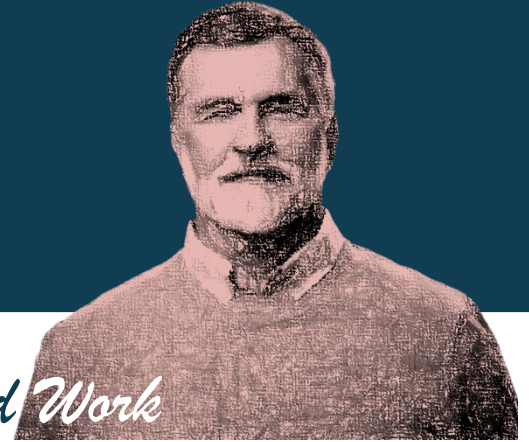


MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERIES

"D"



My mental health journey has been Hard Work

Why were those the words you picked?

I chose these words together with excitement and as a guiding light for my journey. The effort that is required to maintain my mental health is not something that comes naturally. My mental health journey is something that requires daily reminders and a dedicated effort. My journey requires consistent focus, without breaks or gaps. This means I am always working to maintain awareness and apply best practices for my physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. At times this can be exhausting. However, I know the alternative can come with big consequences to overall health and greater setbacks. The consistent hard work that comes with my journey keeps me honest and humble.

What is one internal barrier, perspective, or insecurity you hold that you feel is unproductive?

The willingness to accept that I am unhealthy. During my most acute health crisis', the barrier that most often stopped my path to recover was denial or unwilling to listen to those close to me. I have been resistant to seek help, check myself into the hospital and take the steps towards a healthier version of myself. When in these moments I am filled with shame, regret and often times anger. This results in a lack of openness to accept my current circumstance and move towards the next steps. This barrier, almost always when broken down leads to recovery.

What is something you are grateful to have learnt, or skill you are proud to of incorporated into your mental health journey?

Over the years I have learnt the power that exists in reaching out for support. This is essential, I have realized the journey does not need to be lonely. If I look back over the years, it is clear there are people in my life that are and have been willing to provide a helping hand. As time has passed, I have done a better job of searching, accepting and welcoming others' assistance, guidance, friendship, and love. These people often help provide me with perspective, gratitude, and tools to better help myself. Over the years support has come in many different forms such as family, friends, health care professionals, and peers going through the same health concerns. Being vulnerable, open, and honest with these people is what has garnered the best results for me.

As it relates to the culture of mental health and masculinity or being a "man" what is one thing you are hopeful or excited to see changing in the future?

Vulnerability. I am hopeful that more men are developing the courage to be vulnerable. Vulnerable with themselves, and with others about their mental health. I have often held myself responsible for knowing all and controlling my circumstances. This has created a sense of stubbornness, as well as feelings of disappointment and shame we I didn't know or control all around me. This has been a significant belief I have to continue to work to shed over time. By working to shed these beliefs I have found myself spending more time being reflective versus defensive. I believe this has been a key part of my journey to developing a better version of myself.

What is a piece of advice relating to mental health that is so good or so horrible, you would want other to know or be aware of as they move through their own journey?

I want to give one for each so good and so bad.

So good. "Exercise helps mental health". Looking back on the years, during periods when I was physically fit, it was easier to smile, I found more joy and purpose in my life. However, when I become physically unhealthy, it would generally create a negative impact on my moods and mental health.

So horrible. "Take your medication and everything will be alright". Finding the right tools and balance of therapy can be a long journey. For many it can be years, decades, or even a lifetime. Medication can be very helpful, however finding the right mix of medication, mental health therapies, and exercise is something that I will always seek.

D currently works in the finance industry. He has had the opportunity to work in a number of roles ranging from analytics and sales. D's journey towards mental health and wellbeing has not been a linear pathway, at a young age he excelled in sports.

This experience developed an unrelenting focus on excellence. The skills and attributes develop early on helped him become a collegiate athlete, earning a full scholarship to a university in the United States. After finishing his athletics, life presented a new challenge. During a transitional period, D had his first of multiple Manic and depressive experiences, in his early twenties. He was later diagnosed with Bi-polar.

Since this moment, navigating Bi-polar, finding his spirituality, and discovering his mental health and well-being has been a filled with challenges, learnings, and successes. D regularly acknowledges that mental health is something that each individual needs to discover on their own, at the right time. The acceptance of support, accountability and love from others is a welcomed and a balancing act through the journey.