

The Roadway Back

Realistic expectations and intentional new habits help recover after a physical setback By Tracy Beard

Everyone considers a day of activity a little differently. For me, a 12-mile hike three or four times per week was typical. When it's not raining, one friend puts in a few 60-mile bike rides each week. My son trains several days a week in preparation for each spartan race he enters. For others, it might be a 3-mile walk around the lake on the weekend, a few laps in the local swimming pool, or a yoga class twice a week.

Whatever it is, if you suddenly find yourself unable to enjoy your healthy exercise routine due to an injury or illness, you might feel discouraged, less healthy, and even depressed. So how do you get back to where you were? New Year's resolutions are heroic, but often they last only a few weeks or even a few days. Let's begin our journey by forming new habits in February. The first thing is to start from where we *are*, not where we thought we would be, should be, or where we want to be.

MY STORY

In November 2018, I was in Barcelona to go on a cruise. I spent my pre-cruise day walking up and down the hills of this stunning city. That afternoon, my feet began to ache. By the next day, I was in great pain. I made it through my trip and came home assuming I had another case of plantar fasciitis. The misery went on for months, continuing to get worse. I was used to hiking 5-12 miles several days a week and after a year of this agony, I found myself hobbling from the living room to the bathroom in my home.

Eventually, I made my way to the podiatrist. I learned I had severely pulled several tendons in my feet and because they had hurt so much, I had been "clenching" my feet while I walked. The clenching caused my leg muscles to tighten, which precipitated excruciating discomfort in my lower back. My exercise routine was destroyed. A couple of months ago, the podiatrist outfitted me with several apparatuses to begin alleviating my agony, but it was not an overnight fix. I am on the mend, as they say, but where do I go from here? How do I get back to where I was without re-injuring myself?



THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

Step 1: Realize good health requires a balanced mind, body and soul

After an injury or setback, not only is your physical self injured, but often your mind and soul also suffer. If you have not experienced an injury or illness, maybe you are ready to push yourself to a new level of health and vitality.

Step 2: Take stock

Evaluate each part of your being: mind, body and soul. Each aspect interacts with the others. Remember this is your life and it is not a trial run. A friend recently told me a little story she heard. One of her friends suggested that she get a 100-foot tape measure and lay it out on the floor. Then she told her to stand on the number that represented her age. If a person lives an average of 90 years, look at the amount of your life that is already gone. Without regret, look at what is left. What do you want it to look like, and how do you want to be in it?

Step 3: Be Mindful - Soul Recovery

Mindfulness means being fully attentive at each moment. It is about being the best of who we are in each moment. One of my favorite sayings is, "Life is not measured by the number of breaths that we take but by the moments that take our breath away." Don't miss out on the moments.

Step 4: Learn Something New - Mental Recovery

It is imperative to keep the mind stimulated as we grow older. What do you want to learn — a new language, a new skill? Pick something and begin.

Step 5: Set Goals - Physical Recovery

My word for the year is "intentional." This word applies to all aspects of my life, work, relationships, health and more. My feet have healed enough to begin rebuilding my physical routine. In January, I started riding my lifecycle on the lower levels for 20 minutes several days a week. From there, I progressed to walking in my neighborhood for 30 minutes three times a week, and recently I walked a country road with rolling hills for an hour. Where are you starting from, and where do you want to end up? Plot a course and set some goals, but make them realistic so you do not re-injure yourself or have a setback.

Check out some of the paths near you, or venture out for a walk in a nearby neighborhood to get yourself out and moving. And remember, regret and guilt do not serve any worthwhile purpose, so leave those behind. Be sure to check with your physician before beginning any new exercise or eating plan.

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Make this light and delicious soup to celebrate the commencement of your journey of forming new healthy habits.

Citrus White Bean and Kale Soup

1 15-oz can cannellini beans, rinsed
 5 Cups water
 2 Cups vegetable stock
 1 large yellow onion, diced
 2 Tbl. olive oil
 8 cloves garlic, chopped
 1 tsp. dried thyme
 2 bay leaves
 2 small red potatoes, peeled and cubed (about 1 Cup)
 1-½ Cups kale, stalks removed, washed, chopped and tightly packed for measuring
 Juice and zest of one lemon
 Grated Parmesan cheese

Heat olive oil in a large soup pot and add onions. Cook on medium heat until onions are transparent. Add water, stock, beans, potatoes, garlic, thyme, and bay leaves. Cook 20-30 minutes on medium heat or until potatoes are soft. Add kale and cook 5 more minutes. Add lemon juice and zest. Serve with grated Parmesan.

Vancouver, Wash. resident Tracy Beard writes about luxury and adventure travel, traditional and trendy fine dining and libations for regional, national and international magazines and is a regular "Out & About" contributor to Columbia River Reader.