

What's Your Why?

BY **BIJANA KADAKIA, ND, TRUE HEALTH MEDICINE PC**

I was very inspired recently while watching a video about minimalism that the first step recommended by the speaker was to establish your WHY. Aside from her other tips and discussion on minimalism which were very interesting, this concept of really identifying your WHY has really stuck with me and is likely to become one of my most regular questions for patients.

Of course, I ask about symptoms and use that information to establish an accurate diagnosis and provide medical advice. But as a naturopathic physician, I address my patients as individuals and understand that what works for one may not work for the other. I already ask my patients about their goals and what that would really look like for them. Asking for their individual WHY will provide an additional layer of information and motivation for both me as a provider and for the patient to help us work together to establish their best path.

For example, a pre-diabetic patient recently came in saying they want to get their blood sugar under better control to avoid developing diabetes. What that really means to them is avoiding the need to prick their finger every day and decreasing their risk of developing dangerous side effects like peripheral neuropathy, kidney damage, blindness and diabetic ulcers. This gets at their WHY a little bit - they want to be healthy and avoid these serious symptoms - but to what end.

It is my feeling, and what I have read in many patients' intake paperwork, that we all value health and wellness in a general way. But what I really want to know is WHY do YOU want to improve your health? What is it that motivates you to pick up the phone and schedule an appointment? What is it that motivates you to start a walking or other exercise program? What is it that got you to finally try kale? What is the reason or reasons that are going to

sustain you when your health care team asks you to make a difficult lifestyle change or take time for health improving behaviors? What keeps you going when the going gets tough?

Listening between the lines, I often hear patients describe wanting to be physically able to play with their children or grandchildren or wanting to be well enough to do their favorite activities. Sometimes it's as serious as wanting to be alive long enough to accomplish something. The specifics vary with the patient and the day, but life purpose and relationships are usually at the top of the list. For the pre-diabetic patient mentioned above, she wants to avoid developing diabetes. She has seen family members succumb

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to early death from complication of diabetes. WHY? So that she can continue her life's work until she decides to retire, enjoy travel and recreation into her elder years and enjoy time with her children.

In the same video that inspired me to think about why, the last last piece of advice was as good as the first. Once you know WHY you are making a change, start doing that now in whatever way you are able. It's the most important reason that you are working on improving your health and life, so why wait? I encourage you to think about your WHY and make sure you are keeping that in view. If improvements in your health will help you get to that WHY, my colleagues and I at True Health Medicine, PC would like to help you get there.



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