

Some challenges can be so daunting that you are prompted to question, in-between bursts of effort, why you chose to put yourself in the situation. The grueling nature of the journey may even lead you to consider backing out. But you stay—not simply because you are not a quitter, but also because you recognize that these demanding moments often stoke your most remarkable efforts.

After my parents' divorce and being diagnosed with scrupulosity—a form of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder—I moved down to Georgia to live with my uncle and attend Kennesaw State University. And so began my detoured path to physical therapy—a search of equal parts methodical and instinctual, of thought processes both logical and emotional, culminating in a decision both inevitable and unexpected. The concepts of study group and warm winters were new to me, but it was the situation back home and my own individual blemishes that cascaded me into a place from which it was impossible to focus. I could usually skate off such issues in the rink or curl them out in a heated gym session, but when my grade point average fell below a 3.5, I had no choice but to return home for behavior cognitive therapy.

I returned to Georgia optimistic and energized, well on my way to a career in sales when I felt something inexplicable. I remember sitting in the garage one evening, watching my uncle workout, recalling the time he told me about his abusive father. Perhaps it is the main reason he went to UofM on full wrestling scholarship, and the reason he ended up in Atlanta (where the WCW headquarters is). Coming here during the summers as a young kid, watching him morph those scars into muscles—those are moments forever engrained in my mind. I found myself revisiting those moments—tangible degrees of accomplishment, progression, and hard work—and placing them in a larger context as my inner monologues began to take shape.

The first step, naturally, was personal training. It was here that I began to realize that imperfections create opportunities for improvement. Still, while the pace and creative necessity felt new and invigorating, the (lack of) challenge and curiosity failed to promise a lifetime of problem solving and difference making. As I dealt with my own anterior pelvic tilt, I valued too much the stories on this side of the curtain—the injuries, the daunting hurdles, the impact therapists can have on one's quality of life. It impassioned me to strive to create an environment where quitting wasn't an option. I had already lived that life. Now, I was prepared to serve it.

As a technician at the HOPE network, I sought to remain a pillar of support, guidance and improvement in a room so crippled by injury. One particular man, a car accident victim with impairments in his legs and brain damage that caused behavioral issues, constantly berated therapists and became quite a handful for the staff. After examining the mistakes of others, understanding the patient's process and the intricacies associated with his injury, I was able to find a common ground and ease the tension through patience, flexibility and humor. Having that empathy is a level of humanism I believe exists within all of us, but how deep it extends depends largely on the links of experiences we create and the struggles we personally endure.

More anything, I enjoy carrying the burdens of others. Perhaps being that invested is a symptom of my scrupulosity—constantly asking myself *what am I missing? What ingredient can I add to this to make it complete?* Or perhaps it is just that the satisfying outcomes—like the sight of man rising from his chair after being ridden there so long—provide that inexplicable feeling I once felt long ago. You witness, that even in such moments of despair, under seemingly

insurmountable conditions, a person's strength to not only endure, but to prevail. And when that happens, and you are an integral part of that effort, there is no greater feeling in the world.

When I left home at 17, I was dealing with my own family issues and my OCD. In a world where mistakes can be unforgiving, resiliency is tested, and the frustrations from a lack of perfection can mount, it takes a great deal of reflection to make the correct decisions and a certain adaptability to adjust to the detours that lie ahead. And in that sense, moving to Atlanta as 17-year-old and working as a physical therapist are parallel worlds.

As I progress in my career, I believe that my tendency for reflection will further bring to the light the complexities that color life. It is my great hope to continue my schooling at a procedural, academic environment. With years of experience, an ability to deal with diverse groups of people, and an unbending will to perform my obligation at its highest level, in my most aspired setting, I am certain I can contribute a unique perspective and skillset to your school, and I would be honored to begin the next chapter of my training in such an opportunistic environment. While deciding to be a physical therapist was the result of a methodical search, in the end, my instincts decided for me.