

A different me.

Do you have a chronic health disorder or know someone who does? According to PBS you're not alone; about half of all adults, 125 million people, have chronic health conditions. Chronic conditions include heart disease, stroke, cancer, type 2 diabetes, obesity, arthritis, and the myriad of autoimmune conditions.

Being diagnosed with one of the above named conditions can change the appearance of what life once was. With the news of a health complication, sadness may settle in as you wonder what your future will hold. Whether you are newly diagnosed or have been living with your condition for quite some time, let's consider some options for just how to cope.

Harvard has an informative article on their website titled, "10 Steps for Coping with a Chronic Condition" some of which I've summarized:

- Get a prescription for information. The more you know about your condition, the better equipped you'll be.
- Build a team. Don't ignore all but the doctors--a nurse might be a better resource for helping you stop smoking or start exercising. You'll get the best nutrition information from a dietitian or nutritionist.
- Coordinate your care. A primary care physician can put the pieces together to make sure your treatments are good for the whole you. If that isn't happening, ask your PCP for help; and if they aren't willing to help, consider looking for a new doctor.

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What now?

Recently I've run across a number of people in early careers who are facing new life challenges. This may be a new college graduate finding himself in a new city and career, an early career professional in the first 5 years in it. And for some, they completed a degree and are working in a field they now realize they really do not enjoy. The 20's can be tough years – as much as college was new, it was still familiar in that it was a school environment. Now there are no ready-made boundaries of schedules, people, beginnings, and endings. Perhaps you're that age, have an adult child who is going through it, or know someone else who is. Let's take a look at it and see what each of us can learn about not only the age group, but also find something as a take away point for your own life.

I ran across the above quote but I really like it as it summarizes the feelings I hear from those of you in your 20's, and I recall feeling this way as well in my 20's.

Relationships are changing--whether married, engaged, or single--the depth and breadth of what they are is maturing and new. Playing a game of Frisbee in the college quad is not part of the day, and you can't just make a plan with someone down the hall in the dorm. It is also important to find the time for a volleyball game or game of Apples to Apples with friends – it now takes planning, however. But the GOAL – not the present feeling – is indeed to learn to be loyal, consistent, and stable in one's life. Note that it is the GOAL! ☺

I looked through a couple of blogs before writing this to see what others were saying about life after graduation from college. And these were some of the feelings and ideas expressed:

- Social life has changed – both in what you do and figuring out with whom and how to do it.
- Life is no longer scheduled by the semester – something you know, but have never lived before. How long is this job - forever??
- Your friends are no longer nearby in many cases – and you *miss* the friends you used to hang with, let alone the bestie who was always there in a difficult time.
- School provided the context for friendships – how DO you meet new friends your age if you don't just go to the bar?
- The goals are no longer part of the ebb and flow of life – each semester defined them as well as what a parent wanted (get a job) or you had as an end goal (a diploma).
- You're feeling proud of yourself and what you've accomplished so far – you got the job, you have someplace to live – but you really miss the routine of ongoing school years.
- Family and parents are people you now miss, if you've moved; and you find yourself strangely alone and lonely without them.

I'M IN MY 20S NOW.
 PERHAPS TOO YOUNG FOR MARRIAGE
 BUT DEFINITELY TOO OLD FOR GAMES.
 TOO OLD TO JUST BE
 TALKING TO BOYS JUST FOR THE SAKE OF IT.

TOO OLD
 TO BE JUMPING FROM
 PERSON TO PERSON.
 AT THIS AGE
 LOYALTY,
 CONSISTENCY &
 STABILITY
 IS THE GOAL.



from behappy.me



If you've been out in the workplace for a couple of years the above may be resolving to some extent, but new things may come up. And perhaps some will come up in the first year as well. You learn you do not *like* the job you're trained for – now what? Life feels like it's just going to go on the same as it is now – forever! Will it ever change? You want/need a vacation, but only have a few days or a week or two. You used to have two after each semester – at least. Nobody is seeking your opinion at work. Why? And there are work politics, how to manage those? You are engaged – or married – and wonder if this is all there is? Or, you're single and can't find someone to date. Or you are homosexual and haven't come out yet. You are feeling more anxious, depressed, or lonely, and cry a lot.

So, this "adulthood" you were talking about and hoping for and preparing for over 20 years is not quite what you'd hoped for – and you are ready to scream at the next person who says, "Welcome to adulthood! Get used to it!" Let's examine this for a moment – because what you are feeling is real and understandable and you are not the only one. And truly, you don't need to "get used to it".

First, what you are experiencing is so real that there is a name for this period of life: emerging adulthood. This implies it's a process – not an overnight thing. The college officials may have handed you a diploma you'd earned, but that didn't magically change anything else. Thus in the quote on page 1 – this is a period of *moving toward* stability and consistency.

In addition, it is really important to recognize that we now know that part of the brain is not even developed fully until 25 – thus some of the frustration you may be having. The prefrontal is the part of the brain that controls impulses and allows you to develop long-term strategies. So – without the goal you've had for years, and seeing life ahead of you seemingly forever – no wonder you are overwhelmed and frustrated and can't figure out how to manage it all. Even the need to manage it all – i.e., career, work, social life, intimate relationship, money, living arrangements, car or transportation, spirituality, health, and the list goes on – is difficult to do when one's brain is still growing neurons to help you plan, manage, and organize your life.

Next, or third, you may be one of many who are impacted by anxiety, depression, or even schizophrenia in a very limited number of cases. Mental health issues tend to first show up in one's 20's. This means that while you had perhaps some anxiety about tests or school, it now may be at a higher level as you find the job has you worried, you can't relax in the evening, you are having panic attacks, or you are crying all of the time and thinking of suicide. It's important to be willing to look at this at this time – while this age group has more new diagnoses than other stages of life, it's also the group least likely to ask for help. Help stamp out the stigma of mental illness, and talk with a counselor, ask for help, take medication if necessary. Life can be easier if those are needed and one accepts them.

So, what is a person to do beyond the above and knowing they are not alone. Well, a few ideas garnered from others and my experience in working with others.

- Keep in touch with family and go see them as you need to. Facetime them. Call them. Truly, texts are great, but when you're at the point of loneliness a call helps.
- Find or set a goal – to learn a new hobby, finish the next project at work, identify the promotion you could get at work and what you need to do for it and write out the 3 things you need to do in the next 3 months toward that, get a dog and learn to train it. The goals were inherent in your life before. Now you have to work to identify them.
- Volunteer – go hand out water to the homeless, fill foodbank boxes, volunteer to teach a Sunday School or volunteer for Young Life or Lifeteen. You'll feel better reaching out – and it will keep balance.
- Find an exercise class or hiking group – and go! ☺
- Join a: professional group, alumni group, sorority or fraternity group near you. These often have meetings in larger cities – or you could offer to start one.
- Eat, sleep, and exercise regularly and well. Ok, so you have crazy hours – figure out how to get the nutrition in and still deal with the business trips. Or sleep 7-9 hours, and then get up! Sunshine is a great healer.
- Find a faith community – it can be a meditation group, church in the faith you have had, nature hiking that brings you into connection with a greater being, chanting group, or something else. Maintaining and growing spiritually will help you in the rough patches. Unsure of what you believe? Find a spiritual director or mentor.
- Call your old bestie – she'll still be there. It's reworking how you experience the relationship. When one of you marry your friendship will be different. Be patient, work it through with her. It does take a lot of work to build AND maintain relationships. But it is worth it in the end.
- Don't worry if you don't find the person of your life right away. Perhaps it will take time to marry, the average age for marriage is increasing to 24 for women and 30 for men. You're far from alone.

Remember – loyalty, stability, and consistency are the goals, but you won't achieve them for a while. Keep breathing, reach out to others, dig deep within, express your spirituality, and you will find that eventually life does feel more secure as you become more secure within.

September is:
Suicide Awareness Month

October 2-8 is:
National Mental Health Awareness Week

September is also known as National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month which helps promote resources and awareness around the issues of suicide prevention. Suicidal thoughts can affect anyone regardless of age, gender or background. It is the 3rd leading cause of death among young people, the 10th leading cause of death in the US, and occurs at a rate of nearly 20 of 100,000 people in those over the age of 45 according to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. In many cases the individuals, friends, and families affected by suicide as well as those impacted by any mental illness feel significant shame and stigma. Mental illness runs the gamut from anxiety disorders to depression to PTSD to eating disorders to obsessive compulsive disorder to ADHD. Take a look at the resources available from the National Alliance for Mental Illness at www.nami.org or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org. And if you're willing, pledge to do your best to be stigma free in your actions and words related to mental health at <http://www.nami.org/stigmfree>. Please do not hesitate to speak with Dr. Beth if you need help for yourself or someone else.

A different me. (cont.)

- Beware of depression. Some of these illnesses actually can cause or increase depression. And if it's not due to the disorder, such as diabetes or Graves Disease, then it can certainly be a by-product of it. Read up on the signs of depression. Let your doctor, counselor, or psychologist know if you think you're depressed or heading in that direction.
- Reach out. Not only to your doctors and nurses, support groups can sometimes be very helpful. See <https://211arizona.org/health-dental-maricopa/>

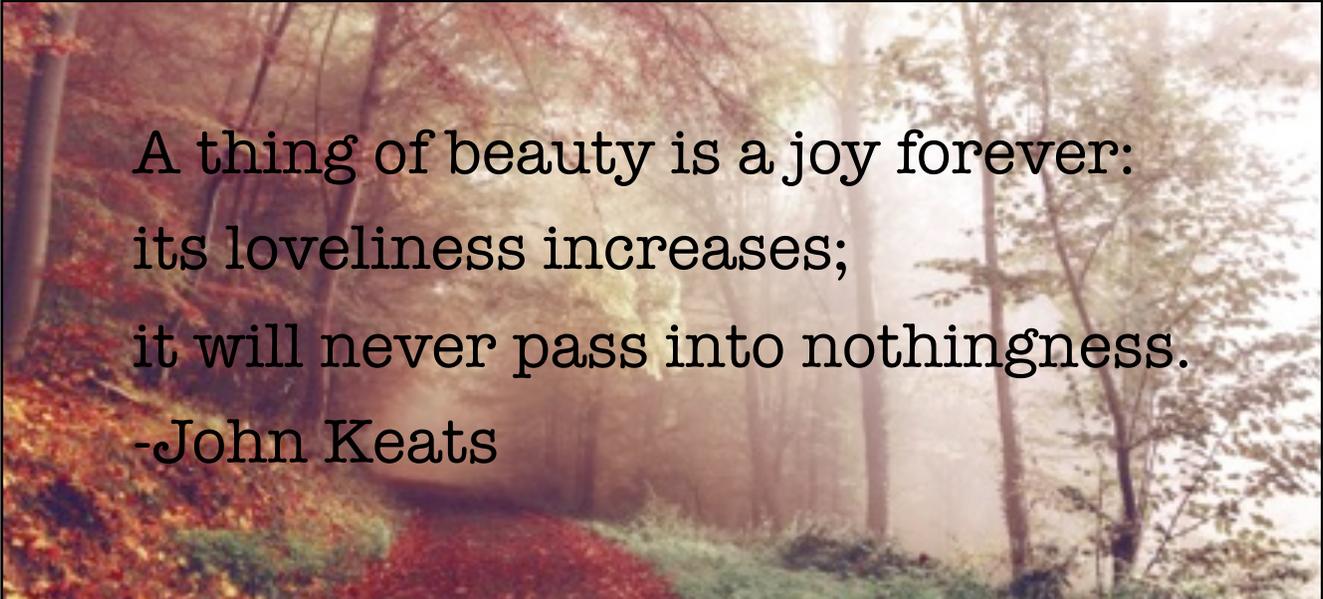
Here are a few other ideas taken from those I know who have chronic illnesses:

- Find gratitude. Look for something daily to be grateful for. It need not be something huge, perhaps even a smile from the clerk at the supermarket, but looking for these moments daily will help you maintain a more positive attitude.
- Self-care. YOU are worth caring for. Is there something you can do to treat yourself? Is it a warm bubble bath? A scented candle? A call to a friend? The ritual of making yourself the perfect cup of coffee or tea?
- Do your best with things, but don't expect perfection from yourself. Dear ones, we aren't perfect beings, so we have to accept our limitations. So if you follow the limitations for a gluten-free diet or to maintain blood sugar levels one more time today than yesterday there is success. You'll get there!
- Take a loved one to your doctor appointments with you. A second set of ears never hurt – and may help you catch more information and then

implement the changes more easily.

There are two approaches I've seen people take to chronic health challenges. One is to give in and up. The other is to keep looking for new ideas, determining to take each day as it comes and do the best they can that day. In The Four Agreements this means that one chooses based on how they are that particular day. So what my best was Friday when I was exhausted is very different from today when I am rested and have recuperated with some stress-free time over the weekend. I encourage this view!

Hope is sometimes very difficult to hold onto when dealing with an illness on a chronic basis. It can feel as though there are no new ideas, no changes available in medical care, or that you've tried everything. This is where delving into your spiritual connection is essential. Research shows repeatedly that those who have faith or spiritual practice and actively practice it experience less stress and fewer physical symptoms. I recently read an excellent article by Parker Palmer in which he speaks of how hard it can be to find sanctuary, or refuge, from the violence we can experience. Well, chronic health issues and the symptoms can feel like a violence within the body due to pain or discomfort. I encourage you to listen to Carrie Newcomer's song, Sanctuary, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HjOioWTVAl4>. Perhaps it will help you find peace within to meditate on it. Don't give up! Reach out for help, and hope, as you need it. You are NOT alone.



A thing of beauty is a joy forever:
its loveliness increases;
it will never pass into nothingness.
-John Keats

Fall Harvest Vegetable Soup with Coconut

from strongyoga4women.com



2 tbsp vegetable oil
1 large onion, chopped
1 c each turnip, sweet potato, and pumpkin, peeled and cubed
1 tsp dried marjoram
1 ½ tsp each ground cinnamon and ginger
Sea salt and black pepper to taste
1 tbsp chopped scallion
5 c vegetable stock
2 tbsp flaked almonds
1 chili pepper, seeded and chopped
1 tsp sugar
½ c creamed coconut (or coconut milk)
Freshly chopped coriander or parsley to garnish

In a large saucepan, heat the oil, add the onion, and cook it gently for 4 – 5 minutes. Add the cubed vegetables and toss them over medium heat for a further 5 – 6 minutes. Add the marjoram, ginger, cinnamon, salt and pepper, and cook over low heat for 10 minutes, stirring frequently. Add the scallion, stock, almonds, chili pepper, and sugar, and simmer gently for 10 – 15 minutes until the veggies are tender. Check the seasoning. Grate the coconut into the soup (or pour the coconut milk in) and stir well. Sprinkle with garnish and serve.

Resources:

Reading:

[The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom](#) by don Miguel Ruiz

[How to Make Friends in a New City](#) at <http://www.succeedsocially.com/howtomakefriendsnewcity>

[www.succeedsocially.com/howtomakefriendsnewcity](#)

[Lean In for Graduates](#) by Sheryl Sandberg

[How to Live Well with Chronic Pain & Illness: A Mindful Guide](#) by Toni Bernhard

[Hope & Help for Living Well with Illness](#) by Sr. Karen Zielinski (Christian Orientation)

Music:

The Beautiful Not Yet, Carrie Newcomer

Tranquil Guitar, Ryan Judd



Pumpkin Spice Latte Sugar Scrub

from apumpkinandaprincess.com

1 1/2 c brown sugar
1/2 c granulated sugar
2 tsp pumpkin pie spice
1 tbsp ground coffee
1 tsp cinnamon
1/2 c almond oil
1 tsp vitamin E oil

In a large bowl combine sugars, pumpkin pie spice, cinnamon, and ground coffee. In a small bowl whisk almond oil and vitamin E oil, pour into sugar mixture. Mix until well combined. Store in air tight container. ***As always, be sure you're not allergic to any of the ingredients and check with your physician if you have any concerns about body/facial scrubs.



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www.thewholenessinstitute.com

For articles I post twice a month, see my blog at...

<https://thewholenessinstitute.wordpress.com/>

Lastly, for weekly encouragement you can find me on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/BethSikoraPhd>