

Emotional Injury

Last month, I clocked just shy of two thousand miles driving zig-zagging all across California. House hunting. School hunting. Business hunting. Sanity hunting.

Short version: it stressed me the fuck out. Usually, long drives help mellow me out into an almost zen like state. My zaniest ideas, and gnarliest life-detours were birthed on road trips. So what made this one so heavy?

Up until a few days ago, I hadn't a clue. Then I complained about my sore legs, and my fiance morphed into *trainer mode*. Next thing I knew she had me flopping around on a foam roller. Admittedly, my legs felt better afterwards, but the bigger impact was her explanation of the muscles and the difference between soreness due to exercise (indicating you're getting stronger), and pain due to injury (which requires rest to heal from).

It got me ruminating. Does emotional stress work the same way?

I'm no psychologist, but the idea does pencil out. Let me take a crack at balancing this equation:

SCENARIO 1

13-hour work day.

+ 2-hours of traffic to get home.

+ Back-talking kids complain about breaking their \$623 cellphone.

= EMOTIONAL SORENESS

SCENARIO 2

Boss or client tears a passion project to shreds.

+ You vent to your best friend, and they *helpfully* remind you that it happened to you – again – for the fourth time.

+ Best friend twists the knife by laughing at your bad luck. Something your ex-wife used to love doing.

= EMOTIONAL INJURY

Now we can take it a step further if we take a look at what happens when **regular** stress remains unchecked.

SCENARIO 1 x 17-days straight = EMOTIONAL INJURY

I experienced this in college, running 5-miles a day for a year plus *without* stretching. It took knee surgery and 4-months of rehab before I could walk straight again. And I experienced it again on an emotional front last month, pushing myself (and my family) at a very much NOT sustainable tempo of house prep, work projects, trips and budgetary olympics. I grabbed breaks here and there (the 9-hour drive back to Chico, for example) but I never quite healed, and slipped back into a hypersensitive state daily – think emotional 14-year old with an adolescent crack in his voice.

So how does one heal emotional injury?

Enter Grandma Lynn. Whenever I call blubbering, pleading for some magical emotional ointment to heal my wounds, she would inevitably say “time is on your side”. And as with most of her best advice, it took me nearly a decade to actually understand what the hell she actually meant.

Time to sleep. [Time to breathe](#). Time to heal.

Now don't try to bombard me with excuses, because I've already reserved the very best one for myself. “My biggest stressor is lack of time” – bulllllllshit. Find it. Make it. Steal it. The most dangerous side effect of emotional injury, is that left untreated, it will cause no-kidding physical injury.

I don't have any awesome advice for **avoiding** emotional injury. That type of vulnerability is what makes us human. And I'm not about to start apologizing for *that*.

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