Self Actual is for the introspective and open-minded.

This is not your typical "self-help" blog. We don't propagate *happiness* or *success*.

Our mission is to create an honest and compassionate dialogue about a deeper, more durable feeling – the feeling of *fulfillment*.

Because, as the great Tony Robbins says, "Success without fulfillment is the ultimate failure in life."

My name is Patrick Wiltse, Blogger-in-Chief at Self Actual, and I created this site after a series of traumatic events that transformed my life forever.



READ MY STORY

I'm a happy guy, but I wasn't always that way.

Growing up, I was bookish and eccentric. Once a week, a short bus would arrive at my elementary school to take me to another school where I was part of the "gifted" program.

In other words, I was kind of a weirdo.

As weirdos often do, I grew weary of the social friction my weirdness created and sought to conform.

The net result was an adolescent with little confidence and an underdeveloped sense of self, whose high school experience was characterized by isolation and anger.

University was different. It was a wonderful and formative experience, during which I gained confidence and formed powerful friendships.

Unfortunately, just before the final month of my freshman year, my life was derailed by the shocking discovery that I had cancer and needed to leave school immediately for treatment.

And by "treatment" I mean I was forced to say goodbye to my cancerous right testicle.

As you can imagine, my self-confidence did not benefit from this turn of events. Frankly, it freaked me the f*ck out.

Partially due to mental shock and partially due to the physical repercussions of losing a testicle, during my second year of university I was depressed and always tired. Coping with daily life became a struggle.

But time has a healing effect and, as that dreary school year neared its end, I regained some energy and began enjoying life again.

...only to be blindsided by the news that the cancer had returned and I needed to leave school immediately (again) for an aggressive cycle of chemotherapy.

The boredom of sitting through chemo and watching life from the sidelines birthed in me a spiteful ferocity.

Who was fate to keep me from experiencing life the same way as my healthy peers?

I returned for my third year of university with maniacal energy. I partied too much, slept too little, and exhausted myself into a state of depression like I'd never experienced before.

At the recommendation of my endocrinologist (yes, the person who was supposed to be helping me manage my hormones), I started taking anti-depressants. I don't remember if they helped.

All I remember is feeling trapped within my new identity – foggy headed, scared, and unhealthy – a grossly distorted reflection of the person I wanted to be.

That's not to say I wasn't trying to get better. I have what you might describe as a *manic stress response;* it's my disposition to approach problems with ferocity and vigour. I knew things weren't good for me and I badly wanted them to get better.

So that's when my "self-help" journey began. Only, the first couple years of this journey weren't very helpful at all.

I was doing what I thought were the right things. I was exercising and learning about nutrition. I was participating in class. I started dating again. I even developed a meditation habit.

Yet, while my energy levels and social life picked up, it seemed that every time I improved my circumstances, I only became more self-critical. Although I was getting "better", I was more depressed than I'd ever been.

Exhausted and craving change, I audited the timeline of my life, trying to learn from the happy points. It occurred to me that the best, most carefree times of my life, had some distinct commonalities.

First, I was happiest at times I was reading regularly. I was also happiest at times I was being creative, playing instruments, writing, drawing, making videos.

With nothing to lose and everything to gain, I reconnected with my childhood ways. I started playing guitar again. I found some work taking photos and blogging for a local promotions company.

And I began reading voraciously, finding a link to my younger, happier self through timeless words on ink marked pages.

When happiness returned to my life, it returned like I'd never known it before.

Poignant and vivid – a palpable beauty hanging in the air – gratitude illuminating every moment that would otherwise be taken for granted.

Through those rough, formative years, I learned how to treat my mind and body with respect.

I learned what was (is) important to me.

I love my family, friends, and girlfriend. I love music. I love the outdoors.

And I love reading.

It strikes me that so many authors have shown great vulnerability and generosity, exposing their souls to be examined by strangers. Their bodies may expire but their words live forever, and in those words I find one of life's greatest pleasures.

THAT is why I started Self Actual. If even a single other is impacted by the words I share, my goal is fulfilled.

If you enjoy the content on this site, I invite you to join me on this journey of self-discovery and life enjoyment.

Follow Self Actual on social, join our Reader Community, send me an email, or leave a comment below. Whatever you'd like – I'm always happy to hear from you.

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