



HEALTH & WELLNESS / LIFESTYLE

Invest in Yourself

Rory Crouse, LAc | DIGITAL EXCLUSIVE

On March 11, 2019, my life changed. My son Rowan was born. Now he is a very healthy, handsome, pretty big baby and I love him so much.

When he was born, I took two weeks off from treating patients in order to spend time with my wife, Megan, and our baby as we transitioned into this new phase in our lives. It was wonderful. When I went back to treating patients, I decided to prioritize my personal family over my acupuncture family.

I decided to work just three days per week. By working this limited schedule, I have more time to spend with my family and I cherish every moment. When I work, I see many patients in a short period of time; this seems to work very well.

With this extra time at home, I have begun to invest in myself as well. I am guaranteed to go to the gym at least three days per week. Over the summer, the whole family would go to the beach in the morning and I would go surfing. I take time now to get acupuncture and chiropractic when my back hurts from surfing. I recently started taking classes to finish my doctorate through Pacific College of Health and Science (previously Pacific College of Oriental Medicine). I learned to play guitar and joined the Babylon Village Volunteer Fire Department.



Most importantly, I take time to be with the family, read Rowan books, take walks together with the dogs, and cook healthy meals at home every day. All of these things are about investing in myself.

By investing in myself, I find that I am a more capable father and a more effective acupuncturist. This experience has taught me some important lessons as both a business owner and a practitioner.

As a business owner, it's easy to work 60-, 70-, 80-hour weeks to get your business to be as successful as possible. Working only three days per week, I really max out at about 30 hours of work per week.

As a business owner, this initially felt unnatural. However, because I invest in myself so much, I find that I have the efficiency of working somewhere around 60 hours a week, but in a much shorter time frame.

My patients also seem to notice a positive difference. Before the baby, I used to average around 40 patients per week, but since adjusting my schedule my numbers have gone up to around 50 patients per week. Even though I'm working fewer hours, I'm seeing more patients. This creates greater income for my family, as well as the opportunity to help more people.

It's hard to imagine how that would happen except that by investing in myself, I've presented a better product to my patients and am able to be more present and treat them better. As a business owner, I recommend other business owners spend a little more time working on themselves in order to give dividends toward the business with more efficiency in less hours.

As an acupuncturist, this experience also made me notice that there are two types of patients: those who invest in themselves and those who don't. Most of my patients come in with lower back or neck pain, but I also see patients with anxiety and depression. One type of patient has typically

been dealing with the issue for a few days or weeks, and they notice that it is keeping them from accomplishing life tasks.

And then there is the other type, that has been dealing with an issue for many years. Often, they are looking at surgery as an option and are trying acupuncture as a last resort.

The patients who are more proactive and start to see me when they first notice a real problem are getting much better results than those who have waited longer. If a patient comes in with debilitating back pain or sciatica that has been going on for eight weeks, acupuncture is likely able to get them back on their feet in 1-3 weeks and get them feeling good as new. We are also able to give them some lifestyle advice so that they can change their habits and prevent the issue from occurring again in the future.

The patients who have allowed their problems and pains to build over years and years will get relief from acupuncture, but the odds are that we will never be able to fully fix the issue. We are typically able to take the pain away so that they can continue to survive and push off surgery. This is a reality we deal with as acupuncturists because we cannot control when patients come in. And it ties into what I have learned about self-care.

I feel there is a lot to be said for taking time to prioritize health, yourself and your own happiness, getting help when an issue first presents itself. Take the time to exercise and to do the things that make you happy. It has improved my life and I hope it improves yours.

Editor's Note: This article was scheduled for publication before the COVID-19 pandemic shut down many U.S. businesses and daily activities, so some of Rory's advice may not be applicable until "business as usual" returns.

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