



## Making a commitment to me



Last year was a difficult time for me. My physical and mental health took a battering, and it was relentless. I was in a state of overload, my mind whirring with information, frequent medical appointments, sometimes twice or more in the same week, uncertainty over outcomes of treatment, schedules for medication and so much more. It felt very overwhelming and all-consuming. There was little time for much else.

It all came to a head in November when I experienced a very difficult and traumatic event. This was a breaking point and I needed time to recover.

Everything stopped, all the medical appointments, the medication and me. I became unable to function well and I needed time to physically, mentally, and emotionally to heal. To be honest, those early days passed me by in a blur. I did nothing. I'd get up, have a shower, and find I had spent all my energy. Days spent on the sofa, not even watching tv or looking at my phone, just time passing me by.

As time passed, I started to emerge from this dark space, just a gradual sense of being more aware, still feeling very fragile and uncertain of my next steps. But I knew I needed to do something and more importantly, I felt like I wanted to do something.

It coincided with the beginning of this year, the time when people often make New Year's resolutions, but that was a coincidence, it was just the time I felt physically able to try *something*. The decision to look after myself was not a New Year's resolution, more of an opportunity to focus on myself.

I made a commitment to myself to put myself first. I decided to focus on my physical health as everything had taken its toll and I felt like I no longer recognised myself in the mirror. I decided to do the *30 day Yoga with Adriene* programme which is a daily practice that was free to follow on YouTube. I have dipped in and out of yoga over the years - I even have a yoga mat that had not been used for years, but I never fully committed to practice. This programme was available at the time I needed it and I took that opportunity.

Some days it was very hard to do, so I had to remind myself of the commitment I made to myself that I would follow the programme and do some practice each day. One particular bad day, I recall having a difficult counselling session and was very low and emotional. I hadn't yet done my yoga practice and I didn't really have the energy to do it. But once again, I reminded myself of my promise to myself. I did manage to do the yoga practice that day. One of the positions was a plank, where you hold your weight on your arms and toes, with your body stretched out and the instructor, Adriene, tells you to say quietly "I am strong". It is funny as I definitely don't feel like I am, but in that moment, holding my body in that position and saying it out loud, I was able to see that I was strong, strong enough to hold the position. Maybe I am strong enough to get through this and slowly I feel that I am building my confidence and strength.



I can definitely see an improvement in certain positions. In others, I am still clumsy, but the practice reminds me to not judge myself and to use my breath as an anchor. The important thing is that I have shown up and genuinely that is much harder than any of the positions I try to get into. Once I have rolled out the mat, I'm there. I think this is the first time in a very long time that I have genuinely invested in my wellbeing. This is ironic as my career has been focused on helping others work on their own wellbeing and develop strategies to support them, but it is something I recognise now that I have neglected. By no means do I think yoga has healed the effects of the traumas I have experienced, but day to day, taking the time to focus on myself, my breathing, and my body, I have learnt that I have the ability to try. I can see my progress from where I was on day one and where I am today, who knows where I will be in a week, a month or a years' time. It has become part of my routine.

I completed the 30 days and I have continued to include yoga in my day. I have a search of Adriene's back catalogue (there are many videos!) and I select one that I am drawn to. I don't always do my practice at the same time each day, sometimes I'll finish work and do it then - sometimes it will be just before bed. Sometimes I don't feel like I want to, but I always do it, because I promised myself I would, and I made a commitment to myself to continue with the practice.



**Anne Glover, Recovery Improvement Lead**  
**Participation and Experience team**