



KARYN SHANKS MD

Heart, Hope, Healing

We Heal in Our Own Time

BY KARYN SHANKS MD | DECEMBER 14, 2019



The other day I saw a client who came to me for help with persistent fatigue, anxiety, sleep problems, and trouble losing weight.

As a shy teenager, life was already hard. Then I asked him to do more hard things. Like change his diet, letting go of comfort foods he loved but were directly linked to how he felt. Like getting more sleep, giving up precious time at night when he felt his best and connected with his online friends. Like moving his body more when all he really wanted to do was sit still.

To make matters more complicated, his labs showed early diabetes—a collision between his genetics and the sedentary, sugar-loving lifestyle he cherished. A clear call to action.

How do I help him heal? How do I help him heal *himself*? How do I help him reconcile his opposing commitments?

Right? On the one hand, he's committed to feeling better—he showed up. Yet, he's also committed to how he comforts himself, and has resisted all of my recommendations.

He asked for change he both wants and doesn't want.

Sounds kinda familiar, doesn't it? (We've *all* been there!)

So, what did I say to him?

First, you showed up. Bravo. Powerful first step.

Second, you get to be in charge of you. You get to decide, given the information and guidance you receive here (and in all things), to the best of your ability, what to do. I will show up and meet you 100% and walk this path step-by-step with you as long as you want and need me.

I shared with him how a wise mentor once advised me: "Never work harder than your client." Message? Let him lead, let him choose, let him decide when the time is right. With that I challenged him to take charge of himself.

We discussed a variety of strategies, and after shedding a few tears (the way he told me how much things mattered to him), we agreed his next step was contemplation. He chose to step back and "think about everything" over the holidays, do some reading I recommended, try a few things out, then reconvene in the new year. I told him how proud I was of his honesty. (I'm *such* a sucker for sensitive teenage boys, having raised two myself!)

Sometimes we're not ready. Sometimes our first big step toward healing is to just show up. To listen. To take it all in. To contemplate it.

We heal in our own time.

What else would *you* have said to my client?

KARYN SHANKS MD

Karyn Shanks, MD, is a physician who lives and practices in Iowa City. Her work is inspired by the science of Functional Medicine, body-mind principles, and wisdom gleaned from the transformational journeys of thousands of clients over her twenty-five-year career. Her work honors each individual and the power of their stories, their inner wisdom, and innate healing potential. She believes that the bones of healing are in what we do for ourselves. She is the author of *Liftoff*, a manual of energy recovery and healing through essential self-care practices.

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