Feeling Lonely?

Sometimes a long, hard look at how you're living is what you need to get reconnected to others and the world at large.

December 4, 2013 By Kate Ferguson

For most of his life, Todd Patkin felt compelled to prove himself and become a success. Eventually, Patkin achieved all his goals: He was a successful entrepreneur and had a wonderful family. But, Patkin says, "I was suicidal. I wanted to die.

"When you have all the trappings of success," he adds, "it actually can make [it harder for people to understand] why you're so depressed."

At age 36, Patkin suffered a nervous breakdown. "When you're depressed, you feel so alone," he says. "It's like six months ago you were a rock star and right now you feel useless, so the loneliness is tremendous."

The turning point for Patkin was when he and his pregnant wife lost their child. Patkin says he was addicted to exercise and used physical activity to numb the pain. But then he broke his foot and was unable to work out. "I couldn't handle it," Patkin says. "I just gradually sank down deeper and deeper into that hole."

Patkin says his breakdown saved his life. Today, he believes he's been blessed. He found the right doctor, a psychopharmacologist who explained what was happening and placed him on medication to treat his depression. "This is biological, and something you can't control [without help]," he says. Patkin also focused on being easier on himself, one of a dozen steps he undertook to achieve a happier life.

Says Patkin: "These steps to happiness changed the way that I live my life and have made a huge difference." Check his website toddpatkin.com for the full dozen.

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