

June 8, 2016

“My hips don’t lie”

Chronic pain over the past year has had an impact on Alana Shearer-Kleefeld’s quality of life and ability to simply move. As part of the Better U Challenge, Shearer-Kleefeld, manager of Employee Benefits Administration at 3sHealth, will share her story as she endeavours to reverse the impact of months of inactivity. Keep coming back to visit us here or on Facebook to learn about her progress.



A series of family trials put an enormous amount of pressure on Alana Shearer-Kleefeld last year. A favourite uncle was moved to hospice care and she and her mom were tasked with cleaning out his condo; her mom became ill; and, on a happier note, her sister got married.

“I was trying to help everyone and it really was an incredibly stressful time,” she recalls.

“During that time, I started to notice discomfort in my hip. I kept thinking ‘It will get better once things slow down’. I let it go from July until about October or November before I reached out to my physician.”

By then, the pain was so significant that Shearer-Kleefeld was getting only about an hour or two of sleep every night and had developed bursitis in her hip. At work, she was managing to hide the level of pain from her colleagues; only a limp and the occasional cringe any indication that she was suffering. But the pain was becoming chronic and debilitating.

“A lump had started to form on my hip,” she says. “I tried chiropractic treatments and a few things like that but it just got worse and worse and worse.

“The pain was excruciating. I had pain killers and anti-inflammatories. If I took the pain killers, they provided enough relief that I could get about four hours of sleep, but then I

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couldn't drive to work because I'd be too blitzed – becoming dependent on pain killers wasn't an option for me.”

Physio and other treatments have since helped Shearer-Kleefeld to reduce her pain.

“This had affected my quality of life, my work, and my relationships. I was exhausted,” she says. “When I slept through the night for the first time in almost a year, I felt like a new person.”

Through it all, Shearer-Kleefeld couldn't even contemplate taking a walk, participating in her favourite hot yoga classes or getting on the treadmill; just sitting was painful enough. She gained 23 pounds.

“It completely changes how you feel about yourself, it impacts your confidence.”

About five years ago, she joined Weight Watchers for help to lose 50 pounds she'd gained in a previous job which involved a lot of travel and sedentary time. It took a year to lose 40 pounds.

“I was about 10 pounds from my goal weight and then I just hung out there. I thought ‘I don't need to be really skinny’. Then after this hip injury, I gained 23 pounds back.” Her clothes didn't fit and she didn't want to buy more – determined that this was temporary and she would find a way to get back on target.

She is committing herself to lose those 23 pounds and she plans to start that journey with the Better U Challenge.

“I have always been a healthy eater but portion control is a problem. This,” she says pointing to her body and grinning, “is not built on restraint.”

As a self-described work enthusiast, Shearer-Kleefeld struggles – like many women – to focus on herself and her own needs.

“I have declared this the Year of Me (Shearer-Kleefeld will turn 50 this year). I don't want to be living the back half of my life with chronic pain. I want to be healthy, mobile.

“It will be challenging for me to put myself out there as part of this contest and hopefully interesting for people to follow me on my journey. I'm just a normal person. I'm not training to be an athlete.”