

Fall 2023

Autoimmune Allies Blog Project

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Abstract

My project was based around starting a blog summarizing and sharing my own experiences with autoimmune diseases. I was diagnosed with my first autoimmune disease when I was eight and it drastically impacted the way I grew up and have subsequently lived my life. I wanted to create a platform that both shared these experiences as well as shared information and resources to other people who might be struggling through something similar. I also paired it with another capstone project that involved organizing a local meetup support group for individuals.

Keywords: autoimmune, disease, community,inclusive

Section 1: Introduction to your Capstone Project

I knew when I started my capstone project that I wanted to do something I felt passionate about. I also knew I wanted to do something that was out of my comfort zone, I wanted the project to be something I would never have done on my own. Through some deep self-reflection it felt very obvious to do something involving autoimmune diseases because they have been a huge part of my life and are something I can really speak to. I wanted to do a project that allowed me to connect with other people in a positive way and hopefully build some kind of community.

I ultimately decided on starting a blog, I wanted a way to potentially reach people on a bigger scale than just my local community and a blog seemed like a good way. Ahrefs reports that 77% of internet users read blogs(Quan Ong 2023).

Section 2: Elements coming together

Innovative Approach

I had been researching autoimmune issues and illnesses. It's been challenging because there are many diseases that are wildly different and present differently in different people as well. On top of that, there is a disagreement of whether typical medication or more natural remedies really help regulate people's illness. For my project, I want to bring together a variety of advice and strategies from both sides as well as share stories and experiences from a wide mix of people. I shared both experiences and research studies I had found. One of my posts I commented on the fact that women are five times more likely to contract an autoimmune disease than a man (Kronzer 2021).

Emotional Intelligence

My project is very focused on my own experiences with the hope of being relatable to others. Throughout this journey I have done a lot of reflecting on my own unique experiences and

perspectives. I want to use my emotional intelligence skills to make deep and meaningful connections to my readers. I am very focused on coming across with a very empathetic approach. I think in this kind of project it is important to err on the side of caution and be very focused on coming across positive but sympathetic. I think there will be stakeholders that come across my blog that are very emotionally intelligent and some that might not be as much. I want to create the feeling of a safe and inviting place so that is the focus and drive of all my posts and interactions. Northouse states the duties of an adaptive leader as “Important adaptive leader behaviors are regulating distress, creating a holding environment, providing direction, keeping people focused on important issues, empowering people, and giving voice to those who feel unrecognized or marginalized” (Northouse 2016). I wanted to make sure I had these behaviors in my interactions.

Creative Thinking

A big part of my project is based around my own personal story and experiences. I wanted the chance to share information and interesting facts but also wanted the opportunity to hopefully relate to other people. I wanted to tell a story only I could tell. It’s been challenging! It can be hard to put something that is deeply personal out for the world to see. But I also think it's really powerful and I am grateful for this challenge. I started following other autoimmune blogs such as Living Dappled, a blog founded by Erika Page who suffers from Vitiligo. Reading her posts helped give me ideas for my own blog(livingdappled.com).

Your Innovative Solution

I think my solution I chose was more innovative because it is allowing me to reach a much wider range of people. While I would have been more comfortable doing something more locally and it would have been a lot easier. I wanted to challenge myself personally and I wanted the

opportunity to relate to people all over the world and not just in my community. While a blog is hardly a new idea I think as a person and as a scientist I can bring a unique perspective to the narrative I am trying to tell to the world.

Section 3: Results

The benefits to my stakeholders were hopefully the feeling of connecting with someone who had similar life experiences and could relate and understand the kinds of things they were going through. On top of that, I did share some research in my blog posts and hopefully helped provide some new information to people. I did have someone reach out and share with me some of their favorite autoimmune “influencers” from social media which was really cool and helpful. I did have analytics on my site and I had a view counter for each post which was nice to see the views on my posts and not just overall site traffic. I also encourage people to message me and I had a few that did so that was really cool! I had someone tell me they thought my posts were funny and that I should continue writing my blog (C. Black 2023)

Figure 1

View counts for my posts

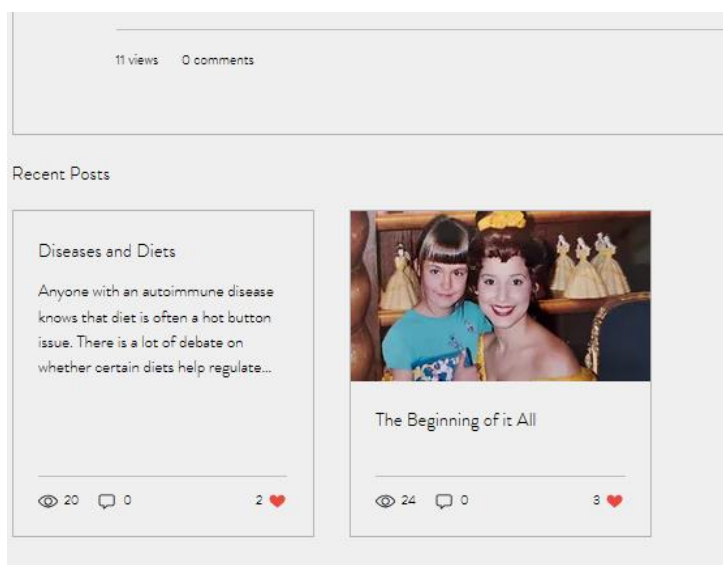
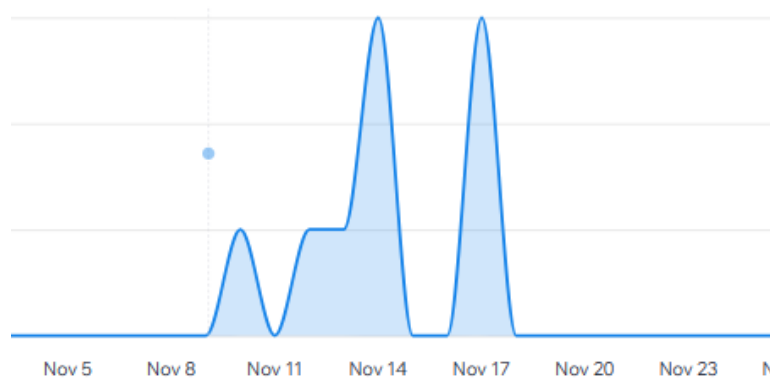


Figure 2

Analytics for my site

**Figure 3**

Average session by day of the week



Section 4: Conclusion

I plan on continuing to write my blog! I have really enjoyed writing and it has been really cathartic for me. I've enjoyed the people I have interacted with from friends and peers to absolute strangers I probably would have never met otherwise. I have been able to share stories,

experiences and knowledge and also gotten to listen to other peoples stories and even learned things I didn't know at the start of this project. Overall, it has been an incredibly rewarding experience!

Section 5: References

Section 6: Appendix

[HOME | Autoimmune Allies \(theautoimmuneallies.com\)](https://theautoimmuneallies.com)

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Black C, Via email, Personal communication 2023

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