

DAILYSTRENGTH: PIONEERING HEALTHCARE SOCIAL NETWORKING

Online healthcare has arrived. Today, there are thousands of comprehensive resources available to people wanting to research their symptoms, conditions and possible treatments. But getting better is about more than facts and figures – it's also about harnessing the support and knowledge of friends, family, and others going through the same challenge.

Unlike existing social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook, DailyStrength offers more than 500 support communities focusing on important life-changing issues like cancer, depression, bereavement, parenting and diabetes. Founded by three internet veterans with more than 20 years of experience conceiving, building, and running the largest communities on the web, DailyStrength (www.dailystrength.org) offers a new, unique online forum providing easy connections to people sharing the same life challenges.

The story of DailyStrength began in the late 1990's when Doug Hirsch, Josh DeFord and Lars Nilsen met while working at Yahoo!. Hired as an early Yahoo! employee, Doug was a product manager in charge of building "community products" which included websites that enabled people to communicate with old friends while also making new ones. Josh was the producer of Yahoo! Photos and Lars was Yahoo!'s Senior Producer of Network Personalization. Over their years at Yahoo! Doug, Josh and Lars played a significant role in making Yahoo! the web's biggest destination by developing new ways to help people communicate with friends, family and loved ones, ultimately affecting the lives of tens of millions of people. Together they helped create Yahoo! Mail, Yahoo! Photos, Yahoo! Message Boards, GeoCities and Yahoo! Groups.

Over time, they all went their separate ways. Doug worked at Facebook, while Josh and Lars formed a start-up Web development company. They still felt there was more they could do to help people connect with others. They had dedicated their professional lives to building products that helped make the world a better place and they wanted to continue that tradition by creating a place where people could find others facing shared life challenges and exchange personal experiences in a safe, caring environment.

DailyStrength was born.

The inspiration behind DailyStrength is steeped in personal experience. All three founders have experienced a time when they faced a personal challenge and were then challenged to find people going through the same thing. For example, one of the founders was profoundly affected by the death of his cousin as a young man and never forgot the longing feeling of needing an understanding person to talk with about it. Seeking not just a friend, he needed somewhere to share his most uncomfortable and darkest feelings, somewhere they didn't know his face or name. Years later, he still wanted to create an outlet for people facing the same challenges. He partnered up with his close friends who identified with the need to help people and they founded DailyStrength.

Today, DailyStrength is a collection of more than 500 safe, anonymous, online social support groups to help people overcome personal challenges or support a loved one as they go through theirs. Chief Executive Officer Doug Hirsch, Chief Technology Officer Lars Nilsen, **and Chief Marketing Officer** Josh DeFord were able to bring a new social network to an adult audience who needed a real place for support facing health and life challenges.

To better serve its members, the site offers both medical and community advisors. The medical advisory board features health experts, who help with the organization of the site and treatment options, as well as contribute to feature designs and community creation. The medical advisors do not provide medical advice per se but rather encourage members to get support from other members and seek out professional help. DailyStrength also provides three community advisors who offer support, encourage conversations and steer people through the support experience. The community advisors also act as liaisons between the users and the product team, gathering feedback and advice to help improve the site.

The more than 500 communities that DailyStrength offers are each dedicated to specific medical and life challenges. Depression, , breast cancer, autism, multiple sclerosis, divorce, and addiction are among some of the largest and most popular communities offered on DailyStrength. Members can join any and all communities they wish and participate in discussions, write in their wellness journal or offer support to other members. There are new communities being added every day, often at the suggestion of the site's members. The site also offers more than 3,000 treatment options for different challenges and

medical conditions and provides an explanation of what each option means. Users can describe their experiences and share the kind of success or failures they've had with the different remedies.

One of the most popular features on the site is a virtual hug. Users can send a hug to other members or to anyone who has an email address to show their support. If members see someone is having a bad day, is sick, or could just use a little love, it only takes a minute to send a hug to show them you care and you're thinking of them. A member's profile will keep track of all their friends, messages from other members, their journal entries and all the hugs they receive in their "hug book."

As the internet and technology we use every day continues to evolve, DailyStrength is proud to lead the way in a new generation of social networking by providing people with the care and support they need to face life's challenges. Doug, Josh and Lars know that sometimes all someone needs is a safe place to vent their problems, be heard and get a little support or encouragement from someone who knows exactly what they're going through.

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