Twitter Thread by Nathan Howe

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Several years ago, a neighbor kid kicked a football and shattered a small basement window. We were a family of six living on a teacher's salary at the time, so I boarded it up, thinking I'd get to it someday. The frame was rusted shut. I couldn't fix it.

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Over the years, I'd sometimes get estimates from window companies. Of course, the plan was to upgrade to energy-efficient windows for the whole house. $15,000. It was simply out of reach. In the meantime, the boarded window let in bugs but not light.

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One contractor explained that the location of the window, with the frame embedded in the foundation, meant that whoever replaced it would need to chisel it out by hand, a labor-intensive and expensive process. And there were six of those windows in the house.

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Honestly, the thought of that window ate at me for years. Every time I went down there, every time I went to the hardware store, it nagged at me. I knew I needed to address it, but I had built up the process (and the price) so much in my mind that I was paralyzed.

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Then my wife had a job change, and we needed to move. I knew that a potential buyer couldn't get an FHA loan on the property if there was a broken window. So I pulled off the boards and cardboard to face this thing head-on. It had been at least 5 years.

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I thought, "What the heck. i'm gonna have to pay for it anyway." I grabbed some WD-40, sprayed all around the rusted frame, and gave it a tug. To my astonishment, it moved for the first time in decades. I pulled the window out and took it downtown. It was a $12 fix.

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I could have fixed the problem for $12 the same day it happened. But I let it haunt me for years, shutting out light and letting in bugs. And I finally fixed it for somebody else when the house was empty. It didn't need to be the most efficient. It just needed to be a window.

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OK, this isn't really about my window.
I mean, the story is true. But it's also a decent parable. Many of us, especially those with ADHD, anxiety, or depression, tend to live with broken windows of one type or another for years.

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Everybody's broken windows are different. They are things that seriously affect our quality of life, and we know they need work, but the actions to address them seem too daunting. I've still got plenty of them myself. If you recognize yours, a few things to know:

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- An imperfect solution now is better than a perfect solution that will never happen.
- Doing the thing is often less painful than thinking about doing the thing.
- Acknowledging how the problem is affecting you can reduce its power over you.

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- Don't blame yourself for dwelling on your broken windows. Just enjoy the light when you fix one.
- There are some windows you can't fix by yourself. Find the right help for the right window.
- You don't have to fix it all now. Just start by starting.

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