

A Journey from Despair

I am a woman who has struggled with ill health for 17 years. I am now 61 years old and yes the worst of my experience started when I was only 44, a mother and grandmother with a pretty average life.

In 1994 my legs began to become numb when I walked any distance. I had back pain periodically since my 20's but like many of us did not pay much attention to it. By 44 though my pain became severe. Then I was diagnosed with spinal Stenosis (abnormal constriction or narrowing of the spinal cavity encasing the nerves). It is a congenital disease. After my first back surgery and after 2 months of recuperating I returned to my office job, but 2 more months passed and in March of 1995 I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I spent my 45th birthday having a right mastectomy, followed by 6 months of chemotherapy. By October I had such depression I thought I was going crazy. After some therapy and an antidepressant I improved enough to live from day to day. However, because of a history of Ovarian cancer in my family, by May 1996 I had a Hysterectomy. My oncologist informed me that after the breast cancer chances of contracting ovarian cancer would increase dramatically if I did not do this. In 1997 both of my hands were operated on for Carpal tunnel as a result of years of working on a computer and calculators. By 1998 I was again suffering with severe back pain. After an MRI, I was again under the knife. A Neurosurgeon removed a cyst on my spine and an orthopedic surgeon fused Lumbar 4 & 5. I was in surgery for 7 ½ hours. I slowly improved and thought I was going to be able to cope with everyday life. It must be noted that by now I realized I would never be able to work again.

Thankfully 1999 brought no new surgeries. The last five years had meant a yearly operation so I was thankful for the break. By now I was physically, mentally and spiritually drained. But I hung in because of my two children and my precious grandson who was now 10 years old.

In 2000 I had reconstructive surgery on my breast where they took stomach skin and fat. Everything went well. However back pain was ever present. My doctor was prescribing many drugs. Neurontin, Hydrocodine, Oxycotin, you name it I was on it.

I pretty much accepted after two back surgeries this would be my life, narcotics and pain. By now, however, my increasing depression got worse and worse. I didn't realize depression was a side effect of these pain drugs. By now I was wondering why I was living because it was such a struggle. Yet I kept searching for answers.

I was sent to a pain clinic for people with chronic pain. After two series of nerve blocks, finally the last doctor, who looked at my chart before administering the last shot, looked at me in the eye and said you know these nerve blocks won't work on your condition. He was right they never helped. So why did they put me through that?

By now I was feeling somewhat suicidal. I was bent over like a 90 year old woman with a cane. Every day was a struggle full of pain, fear and over whelming depression.

By now I was in my mid 50's. For 10 years I had searched for relief for physical, mental and spiritual pain. Being brought up Methodist, through my cancer, I read my Bible and prayed. I asked God to please do what was best for me because I did not feel I knew what was best for me anymore.

At this point while visiting with my daughter in TN, I discovered a holistic clinic. I knew nothing of holistic medicine. I had never heard of Rieki, Raindrop technique, or massage therapy. But at this point I would try anything. I met a wonderful Rieki practioner who told me several years after our meeting that when I walked in her office that day she saw a dead woman walking. I was shocked at her observations but knew she was right. That woman I was then, was simply a shell drained of life.

Suddenly I thought maybe I didn't have to accept my fate, I became excited for the first time in years. Maybe something other than drugs and pain was available!

The Rieki and Raindrop technique, with therapeutic essential oils, I received made me feel better. It was also explained to me that holistic medicine treats the whole person not just certain symptoms. Upon returning to NY I found a massage therapist that would come to my home and give me raindrop treatments and I found a Rieki master I began going to for treatments every other week. For a while I tried acupuncture, and then I went to a chiropractor. Something my doctor had discouraged. After a while I was walking and standing straighter. I was able to go and have some physical therapy. I threw my cane away!

I realized the idea of treating the whole person was an important one. Although I had some excellent medical doctors they failed to impart the knowledge that the mind is probably the most important tool in healing. With encouragement from Jennifer I began to find inner strength to try new things and new thinking. I was really searching for not only physical and emotional healing but spiritual healing as well. Jennifer taught me how to meditate to become aware of my own body and soul, reinforcing the realization of the power of mind in healing the body. I knew I had to get off the narcotics that were depressing me and draining my body of life. Systematically I was able to wean off all, without mega side effects, except a low dose of a Fentynal patch for pain. I also was able to get rid of the anti-depressants, of which at one time, I was taking two different ones every day.

Just as I was doing the best I had in years I had a bump in my road of recovery. In 2007 I suffered acute extreme pain once again radiating from my lower back and surgery number three was done just before Christmas of that year. Spinal Stenosis is a condition that can worsen as you age. This time I was fused in lumbar 3 area. Now I was fused lumbar 3, 4, and 5 in my spine.

The night before the surgery I had a Rieki treatment to cope with my anxiety after which I felt completely peace and prepared for the surgery. All went well and recovery probably the easiest of any of the three surgeries. A year later having abdominal pain I had corrective surgery in the lower abdomen.

As my wellness coach Jennifer has taught me proper eating habits to aid in my increasing difficult digestion. I lost weight and didn't experience the extreme discomfort and constipation that ruled my life because of improper eating and mixtures of all the drugs I was taking. From Chemotherapy, narcotic pain relievers and anti-depressants my body was extremely toxic.

I am able once again to go shopping or have lunch with a friend. Last summer I was able to participate in the cancer walk at Bristol speedway. I planted flower gardens around my home and was able to travel with my husband and dog in our fifth wheel RV.

My experience with the Holistic approach has been totally life changing. I still have some difficult days, at times, but I am able to cope differently. We all struggle with some kind of pain, but how we cope with it is our own choice. I am handling mine much better. I am again able to have a life.

I have been told I am a strong lady. I guess I am, because I never gave up looking for a way to feel better. Maybe that is strength with a bit of stubbornness thrown in, but I know I have been through extreme physical pain that brought me to tears and mental anguish many times.

I feel I have a new purpose in life even if it is only to let others know life can be worth living no matter what we must endure. I look at my illness as a blessing now because during all this time I kept learning as I kept searching. I read everything I could find on positive energy and healing. Jennifer encouraged my spiritual journey in learning to love myself and take care of myself and learn life's lessons and to embrace good things for myself while radiating loving energy to others.

I honestly don't know if I'd be here right now if it wasn't for the things I have learned. I meditate and pray every day and I am still constantly reading and learning to help heal myself.

When we understand the inner power we have to control and direct our own life perhaps we can handle life's difficulties better and be a happier and healthier person.

Thanks to you, Jennifer, for teaching me life is a journey and each of us must choose our own path, and more importantly our choice is the correct one for us. Any mistake we think we have made is just another lesson we agreed to learn in the path of our journey.

P.J. from NY
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