The Grouse and Waiting with Hep C

December 3, 2015 By Matt Starr

I have hepatitis C. I waited a long time for changes in my health, as a decade of battles with ongoing disease that changed my life. Ups and downs occurred, with lowlights that included a liver transplant, different treatments with low chances of success, and complications that continued beyond my sister's loving gift of her live liver donation. I won't go into details here, as it would end up reading like the long story that it is.

Suffice it to say there was some optimism followed by a lot of waiting - and then waiting some more. Questions accompanied the waiting. What would the results be from this procedure, from this medicine, from the complications? Usually, the waiting involved a lot of stress, which deterred healing.

Eventually, I plowed through the waiting by dedicating myself to one strategy to heal my physical and mental state. More strategies would follow. But first, I sat in meditation, which allowed the stress to evaporate, for 30 minutes or more each day. Beyond that brief peace, I wanted the overall feeling of waiting, with hopelessness in my life, to recede into the background.

Silence and aware breathing opened the door for me to stop waiting, and to start finding a way, then more ways, to enhance my health. Many strategies (nutrition, exercise, embracing my disease as teacher, and more) ensued over time, but it started by sitting in healing meditation. This did not take any special skill, just a commitment to heal from within.

Then, Harvoni hit the market, and I was lucky enough to get it through insurance. The 3-month treatment is over, and things are looking pretty good. The final clearness date is in the middle of January.

I believe, and know at some deep level, that ending the passive waiting and embracing healing strategies, helped the medicine be more effective and for my liver health to improve.

You may be someone who has issues with chronic liver disease, or you may know someone who is. The stress of living with serious illness often leads to anxiousness, a lack of patience, fear, isolation, and a feeling of being out of control. When you are dealing with chronic disease, there can be a lot of waiting. You can step into something better than living with unhealthy stress. All of us can.

On my frequent dog walks through Vermont forests, we sometimes flush a grouse from hiding in camouflaged brush. It sits there, stressed, with its little heart pounding away, until it decides things are just no longer cool, and it comes out flying, always jarring me with the sudden flushing sound of its wings. Loudly, it has decided that the time for hunkering down is over, and action is needed to feel safe. The fluff of beating wings reminds me of how when we decide to not sit with milestones of chronic disease and take positive action, we begin to make change.

Are you ready to fly away from your worries and fear about hepatitis c, and instead to emerge and take positive action away from your health setback?

There are many strategies available to help you move past the stuck feeling and "why me" mind set. One of the most helpful is finding the path of contemplation, whether it is on meditative walks outdoors, sitting quietly, or practicing some other connection to your spirit.

Yoga and quiet, aware breathing in meditation are medically proven ways (read Jon Kabot Zinn, the

creator of the Stress Reduction Clinic and the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, to see his MSRC trials and results).
Stop waiting, and find the lessons you can learn from your hepatitis and liver disease.
Please forward this newsletter to anyone you know who is stuck in waiting and could benefit from learning more about strategies towards health.
Oh yea, and eat your kale!
Anything is Possible.
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