Hepatitis C, Fear and Worry

October 5, 2015 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

There are two things I know quite a bit about: 1) hepatitis C and 2) worry. I used to have both.

It took me nearly 25 years and Harvoni to overcome hepatitis C. Worry was much harder to conquer. However, it was the burden I needed to most unload.

Some of you know that for many years I battled serious mental illness. You can read my Hep Story if you are interested in knowing more. What you may not know is how hard I worked at overcoming anxiety, worry and fear. And trust me on this, it didn't happen overnight.

Let me clarify one thing. Fear is a normal human emotion and I still feel it. However, I usually just let fear pass through me. When I don't, fear gets comfortable in my head, and then invites a few friends in; the next thing I know, worry and anxiety are having a party and consuming every part of me.

It took lots of work and practice and trial and error to learn that I didn't have to live with worry. With my history of mental illness, it feels miraculous to me that I am now free from those emotional shackles.

However, I am not here to boast; I am here to confess. Sometimes I forget how messed up I was. When I do that, I lose compassion. There are times when I make an off-handed remark on the Hep Forum that shows I have forgotten what it was like to carry the burden of hepatitis C and the fear that accompanies it. It's even worse when I do this while someone is on treatment that uses ribavirin, a drug that often produces anxiety.

I'm confessing this, because I want you to be empowered, even when you are afraid and people are telling you to snap out of it. Other people may act as carelessly as I have sometimes acted. I suspect that doctors and nurses can get busy and overworked, and perhaps wrapped up in their own fear, that they don't take the time to address their patients' fears.

If this happens to you, the Hep Forum is a good place to work this out. If this happens to you because of something I said, please let me know. I try not to discount peoples' feelings, but I am far from perfect.

However, I won't cosign on endless fear. At some point, we all make a choice--live life in fear, or live life on life's terms. Personally, worry has never improved or solved anything. Worry never

helped my hep C. I could not get rid of hep C on my own, but worry was optional. Now that worry is mostly gone from my life, I don’t miss it at all.

Are you hanging on to worry, fear and anxiety? If so, do you want to hang on to these painful feelings, or are you ready to let go and start living?

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