# Hepatitis C: We Can Be Heroes

June 13, 2015 By Grace Campbell

Yesterday I blogged about my boring Hepatic Viekira Journey. The thought that triggered that small quote is something I want to ramble on about here today.

How many of you have heard of Joseph Campbell's concept of the Monomyth, or the Hero's Journey? Show of hands? I see ... maybe three. That's an excellent start.

Campbell believed that the Hero's Journey was the ultimate narrative archetype. He wrote that virtually ALL narratives could be seen as following a series of steps - a shared journey common to most narratives.

Bear with me, my point is coming up any moment. And here it is.

Many stories, when you examine them, fit into the broad themes of the Hero's Journey. So do many of our journeys with hepatitis C treatment.

I often see the Hero's Journey when I read fiction or watch movies. Think of Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter, Star Wars, Karate Kid, Lion King, Shawshank Redemption ... all fantastic and very popular variations on the Hero's Journey.

The first act of the Hero's Journey is the Departure. You get a call to adventure or action. That phone call from the doctor - they can offer you a place on a treatment program. It's your call!

Of course we know that calls to adventure can be frightening, because adventures are not always "happily ever after" endings. This is the refusal of the call. Can I do it? There are so many obstacles! And I'm scared. Luckily for our hero they often find a mentor - someone who will help them on their journey. You probably will too. It might be a doctor, a friend, a support group, a forum. They can give you the strength to accept this challenge. Like all good adventurers, you accept the call and start on your journey. Over the threshold you go and on the path in front of you.

The next act of the Hero's Journey is the Initiation. You face many trials along the path you take. Your journey is neither smooth nor without some danger. Sometimes we fight the known. Sometimes we fight the unknown. We fight the side effects of these medications. We fight tiredness, nausea, headaches. Sometimes we face prejudice about our illness. We face

discrimination. Each trial we face brings us wisdom, strength and allies.

There is a point where you reach a greater understanding of your journey. You can see the end game. Perhaps you reach a point where your results suddenly look fantastic. Or you wake up one day feeling good! Or you learn not to care about the haters. With your greater knowledge and understanding you are able to face the more difficult parts of the journey.

Eventually you fight the Last Battle. For many of us, that is SVR12. It's the big one - the one that matters. Your victory in this battle grants you great things. A life free of hepatitis C is one of them!

The final stage of the Hero's Journey is the Return. You cross that threshold back into the "real" or "normal" world. This is not as easy as it seems for some. It can take time to rewire your brain into thinking you are free of hepatitis C. Not at a conscious level of course, but at a deeper, more subconscious level. It can take time to adjust to living in the world of health!

And finally, you reach the part Campbell called Freedom to Live. After trials, tribulations, danger and adversity you have earned the freedom to live as you want. Freedom can also mean freedom from worry or fear. It can be freedom to just "be". You have the freedom to live life like other people, in all its rich diverse weirdness.

Perhaps I'm just odd but I can see real common points of reference in our treatment journeys and Campbell's Hero's Journey.

We are heroes, each and every one of us. We have ventured into strange lands and uncharted territories. We have fought dragons. Sometimes we have won, sometimes we haven't. But we keep on getting up and fighting again. Sooner or later that holy grail will be ours.

And we can return home changed people, having learned so much from this journey we've been on.

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