A Letter to Hepatitis C

July 2, 2015 By Matt Starr

Greetings Hepatitis C,

I felt like writing a letter to you, explaining how I feel about you. You have impacted my life in many ways, and for so many years. I've learned from you, but not enough to be clean of my hate for you and all the difficulty you've brought to me, my family, and to countless others who have suffered from your onslaught, some of whom escaped only through death.

I'm better off than those poor souls, and better off than many. I have loads of support from family and friends, a home long ago paid for, and a life without large debt that makes the financial burden of a lost teaching career more comfortable than it could be. I have a strong background in health and fitness, as well a deep spiritual practice that helps me withstand the attacks you bring to my body.

I have the best doctor I could ever want, and loving holistic care from a few that help hold things at bay. My doctor fought hard to get me the new, breakthrough medications that appear to be knocking you down. Hopefully, you don't stagger back up and bring a relapse my way. I wouldn't put it past you. You are a mean bastard.

Some days I am brimming with hope that you will go your own way and leave me to live without you, some days the burden of all your orneriness weighs on me. You have left me with cirrhosis, a liver transplant, and many complications and procedures. I can't join the physical tasks on the farm that I love; wood moving, bringing in hay, keeping up a large garden, and more. I had to leave teaching young children, which I was very good at and enjoyed thoroughly. I don't run or bike distances like I did for decades, play basketball, or hike bigger mountains.

Balance. How do I achieve it, and not let you take me into depression and darkness? How do any of us? It's a tricky dance keeping you from winning the big battle of power between us. I do the best I can by eating well, getting the exercise I can, staying consistent in my yoga room, trying to help others though my health coaching, and being reflective enough to keep myself from being argumentative or low on patience with others while being in an empathic space.

You are in me, but you do not own me. I refuse to let you overcome the vision I have for my life. Some days you might make some progress, but those days will not run the show. I am positive and grateful for all of my blessings at this time in my life, not mourning what I had before you came in like a wrecking ball. But, your metal ball is more like a tennis ball now, heading towards a soft ping pong ball. As you lose control over me, there is much to be grateful for. When I let that ember flame up and burn brightly in my heart, I win, and you lose, Mr. Hepatitis.

The combination of ribavirin and Harvoni is working hard to banish you, and so am I. I have a supportive wife, sons of 17 and 21 years who share their love in many ways, a sister and her family who are all on my side, the always-growing love of my father, and caring friends. I count these all as blessings, and can count on their love, along with my self-care work, especially when the darkness sneaks in and I'm just whiny and "sick of being sick."

No matter what happens, you cannot take any of my blessings from me. You want it all Hepatitis, but I won't let you have it all. I'll always hold on to the beauty of the loving relationships I enjoy, being alive in

this body at this time, enjoying the hills, rivers, farms, and deep woods of eastern Vermont.

We can all find things to be grateful for and to use those positive parts of life to fight against you. So, regardless of our current situation, we can still move towards some healing of self. And then, we have achieved greatness, the power to live well despite setbacks of any sort. Take that, Hepatitis C.

Living On,

Matt

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It’s not always easy, but the balance is obtainable, for all of us. I’m doing it. Search inside yourself to find your Life Purpose, and you can do it, too.

Everything is Possible

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