When You Don’t Look Sick With Hepatitis C: How To

August 9, 2016 By Karen Hoyt

Karen Hoyt is a blogger who has a story about hepatitis C, cirrhosis, end-stage liver disease, liver cancer, and liver transplantation. This excerpt first appeared on Karen’s I Help C blog.

Some people actually have the words “I told you I was sick” engraved on their tombstone. That SO would be like me. From the age of 30 on I was telling my doctors that my food didn’t metabolize well, my body ached, there was dizziness, fatigue, and a bunch of other symptoms. I honestly felt like a hypochondriac some of the time. They kept prescribing antidepressants, sleep aids, and pain pills. I didn’t want that. I just wanted to feel good. So I wouldn’t take my meds. Then I got in trouble for not following the doctor’s orders. The bottom line is, when you don’t look sick with Hepatitis C, people have a hard time taking you seriously.

In spite of feeling bad, my pride kept me active. I might be sick as a dog, but I would get up and fake my way through the day. Beginning the day with bed yoga helped me move past the pain. That’s a practice I continue today! It’s always seemed like exercise made me feel better, probably because of the endorphins. There was a price to pay though. I would stay propped up with caffeine in order to stay moving. By evening, I was beyond tired, sore, and hungry. Many times there were activities to attend, so I would go for more caffeine. Family fun with the kiddos, school, community stuff, and work related events were fun to think about. I wanted to be there. So I pushed.

My routine was to come home from work and take a nap. The last year, I took a nap at work before grading papers. After a couple of hours, another nap would help me with the drive home. If I had an event, I would set my phone alarm for 15 minutes and then head out. Many times, I didn’t sleep. But lying there quietly helped a lot. When the alarm went off, my heart would jump and that adrenaline would get my nerves jangled enough to move fast. I was up and out the door for a sporting event, teachers night, or just a fun family evening.

It makes me feel sad to remember how hard I pushed myself. I gave all that my body had to give and then pushed it to give more. I love my family and had a strong desire to be a good wife and mother. I didn’t want those sweet grandkids to have anything less than full time Nana. Students love teachers to show up for their events. I did a lot of volunteer work in the church and community. It seemed like my energy had no bounds. No one knew how hard I was pushing.

Click here to read the rest of Karen’s blog, “When You Don’t Look Sick With Hepatitis C: How To.”

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