My Hepatitis C Treatment Journey: Changes

May 28, 2015 By Matt Starr

My journey with ribavirin and Harvoni along with expected side effects is, until recently, a journey of my body's tolerance. I have been writing and talking about how well I feel, and how it seems that my personal practices of yoga, meditation, exercise as tolerated, wood walks, gardening, nutrition, and more over the years helped me be stronger and able to avoid much of the expected anemia.

I think that I may have angered the ribavirin gods with my bravado, who I can imagine just yawned and murmured, "Just wait Mr. Starr, you cocky dude. We'll be around awhile, and we have you in our sites. You've just begun, and we have time on our side. With time, we'll take you down."

Well, things are starting to change. The dark scepter of ribavirin's power is malevolently smirking in the shadows, ready to attempt to break me down, slowly but surely. The levels of ribavirin will accumulate over the final two months or more, and it might get worse. It might knock me down somewhat, but it will not take me down. I refuse.

I will hold these effects off; like The Little Engine that Could, at least I think I can. I wrote last week about being alone a lot, and the change in my social life because of the changes. After a talk with Sophie, I saw that if I want to connect again with more couples and individuals, I must be the one who checks in and organizes. And over the last few days I've done that, and it's already reaping benefits. I'm walking with a friend tomorrow, fly-fishing with a new buddy Thursday, and have weekend plans made to go out with Sophie to join another couple I like for dinner.

So, this becomes part of healing too. Instead of whining about isolation, I will come out and make old and new connections. Instead of watching my body change, I will continue to get to the lap pool, walk in the hilly woods with a stronger pace, jump on the bike now and then (killer, maybe an activity that I will leave behind), do more physically challenging yoga, and climb a few of our White Mountain peaks. As the ad says, "Just Do It!"

My version of this active life, in the face of ribavirin's side effects, may not work for you. In my life, I have enjoyed decades of endurance athletics, which develops a certain physical and mental toughness. You might not have my background, which is fine, but you can still push the seal of your envelope to keep your mental and physical body stimulated and able to self heal more effectively.

Find personal practices that can still help you find deeper peace and healing, even if it means sitting under a shade tree on a summer morning, breathing deeply with an essence of life itself.

But, no matter where you are physically, pay strict attention to what you put in your body. Eat to help your liver and your overall health. Without going into detail at this time, be strict about sodium and sugar intake. That can be tricky, because lots of food in boxes and cans have large amounts of salt and sugar you can't taste. Read those labels! There's more to consider, but start there and your liver will be less burdened.

Let's heal together. The dark presence of ribavirin and associated side effects can stay in the shadows. Let's not allow them come out of hiding and drive a stake in our happiness and appreciation for what we

still have.
On a deeper personal note, I want to say thank you to Albert Starr, my 87 year old, healthy father who has spent hours on the phone with me through all of this, at least a few days each week. He is my most steadfast support system, bar none. I am grateful, and feel blessed by our evolving relationship. I love you Dad.
That, for me, is just another reason to live with my mantra to “Love the Life You Live”.

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