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Relationships and Hepatitis C, Part 2 - The Mother/Wife with Hep C

January 15, 2015 By Kimberly Morgan Bossley

This is not your typical picture of someone sick or ill. All the pictures in the magazines all show the mother being the strong caregiver to her children and her husband. For many, this scene is all too familiar. Once a woman, married or not, learns she is infected with hep C, her whole world is changed over night.

Hard to believe this happens but it does. This part of the blog is obviously the most personal part of the series as it is exactly the part I played in fighting my hepatitis C. I was the wife, the mother who drastically fell to the diagnosis of hep C. Before I had been clinically diagnosed, I was already experiencing symptoms. I was fatigued (tired all the time), my legs hurt, and my feet were as if someone was poking needles through the bottom of them. I lost gripping strength in my hands. I could no longer open a jar or my own soft drink top.

These little changes all were going on but I was avoiding them at all cost. In fact, I had just began my own career in the industrial screen printing business and beginning to launch my metal plating part of the business. I was in the prime of my life. I had two children: a 10 year old daughter (who you will meet next segment) and a 3-year-old named Garrett. Life was hectic. It was difficult trying to raise two kids on my own and start up a two separate companies. I look back now and think...what or how did I do that? The fact of the matter is, I was in denial I didn’t want to believe that I could die from hepatitis C, so I pushed boundaries and limits on my body probably a bit harder than I should have.

I started my companies so that I could have my kids with me at the shop and not have them in day care. In many ways, I had the perfect life then. But it all came crashing down on me when I fell deathly ill in 2010. My legs swelled up like balloons, my blood pressure was in the 200’s and I couldn’t talk good or focus on anything. It felt as though I was dying.

A year earlier I remarried. He fit into our family perfectly. He was a hard worker and enjoyed all of life’s joys...that is, until I got sick. Our relationship became a fighting ground, and hurtful things were shouted. I was feeling so sick, so tired, and just wanted someone to come up to me and say, “It will be OK. I’ve got this for awhile.” However, it was difficult for him to understand how bad I felt because the damage to my liver and my condition was not visible. Things were said that made me feel less than - less than a business owner and less than strong. I forced myself to prove a point that I could work, showing that I could keep my end of the bargain up. In reality, I felt like I could collapse at any moment. Add to this, the kids’ school functions, cheer-leading, bowling, football, booster club events, you name it we did it. I grew sicker and sicker because I didn’t want to appear to be the weakest link in our family. One person said to me, "Kim honey, you look so bad, you really need to start taking better care of yourself. Don’t be putting in 40 hours a week at work and then going to games and cheer competitions. But I didn’t listen to my friend. So I continued to be at every function every meeting in my sweat pants, hair up under a hat, taking my pain meds to make it through whatever I needed to be there for.

It took a huge toll on the marriage and eventually neither of us could handle any longer. We have since parted ways, and my daughter and my son are now cheering me on in my care and treatment. They taught me to let some things rest till tomorrow, and to not be such a go-getter to the point of exhaustion. My experience taught me to fight the right battles in life, be it at home or at work. Don’t try to be a super woman and feel you owe someone more than you have to give. I have learned to say “I am sorry, but not tonight” a lot now. I have the breath of knowing I can go home and lay down for a bit, and let my body rest. The hep C body needs more rest than most give it. “Listen” to your body. Those trigger points are not placed in our bodies as trial buttons but warning buttons that your body is crashing.

Learn to accept help from other friends or family who care about you and may be willing to come help clean your home. Set aside your pride. Someday you can repay them. Go to you children’s functions, but take it slow. The less you have to walk the best. Stay a few moments to make your presence known to your child. Let them know that because you are not feeling well that you will only be able to stay a short while. Trust me, your children will understand. They see how you look and they know when you are having a good day or a bad day.

If you are a husband who’s wife has hep C, I recommend patience, patience and more patience. If your wife confides in you, trust her words. Listen to her when she explains the pain. Understand that this condition is life-threatening, and it is very scary to think your kids could be motherless without a cure. Hep C plays on emotions too. Your wife is not going to feel sexy and vibrant and ready to go paint the town. Now her idea is painting a nice quiet room with a warm blanket and peace and quiet. With so much going on in her day, when bedtime comes, she is not looking to strike up a conversation. She is looking to you to be quiet and maybe rub her shoulders to help her fall asleep.

This disease can be a huge deal breaker in marriages. You may feel lack of empathy and understanding for your spouse having a disease you don’t know much about. I encourage you to look into all you can find about hep C. Learn about hep C, and go with her to her doctor appointments so you can be the voice of remembrance for her. This will also show her how much she truly means to you if you are willing to take the time to learn how to help her.

Here is a quick little tip that made my night better, and I have heard it does others as well. If you are sitting there watching your favorite TV program, throw a blanket in the dryer on the high setting for a few minutes...take it out and wrap your partner up in this soothing instant muscle nerve tamer. She will be so happy you did.

Most of all, if your wife is worth everything to you, show her and tell her everyday.. This disease is full of so much uncertainty and for her to know one thing and that is that you LOVE her, trust me, you are home free. Don’t ever make her feel less of a woman...she is already feeling that. She doesn’t need you to confirm it with negative blasts to her. Love and sympathize with her.

“Keep her positive, keep her with fight in her.”

“Not with out a FIGHT!~HCV~(c)”

Kim Bossley