

ONE DAY AT A TIME

IT'S ALL IN YOUR HEAD...BUT

THE POLIO EXPERIENCE WAS DIFFERENT FOR ALL OF US AND THE POST-POLIO SYNDROME EFFECTS ARE DIFFERENT TOO. FOR ME THE CHALLENGE IS BOTH PHYSICAL AND MENTAL. I HAD PARALYTIC POLIO WHEN I WAS TWO YEARS OLD. I WAS TREATED WELL, WORE BRACES FOR MANY YEARS, SPENT THREE SUMMERS IN A SHRINER'S HOSPITAL, AND MADE A GOOD RECOVERY. I DID WALK WITH A BAD LIMP FOR FORTY YEARS, WAS NEVER A GOOD ATHLETE, BUT I DID END UP BEING A GREAT CHESS PLAYER.

THEN THE FIRST SIGNS OF POST POLIO BEGAN TO AFFECT ME. I HAD PROBLEMS WITH MY THROAT AND MOBILITY IN THE LATE 1980'S. I MOSTLY IGNORED IT, AND FINALLY I SOUGHT MEDICAL ADVICE BUT IT WAS NOT VERY BENEFICIAL BECAUSE THE SPECIALIST COULD NOT SEE MY PROBLEM. I DID NOT KNOW IT WAS POST-POLIO SYNDROME BUT I DID KNOW IT WAS A REAL PHYSICAL PROBLEM. THE DOCTOR THOUGHT *IT WAS ALL IN MY HEAD*. ALTHOUGH I FELT CRUSHED I THOUGHT, **WELL, I GUESS THE POLIO IS BACK!**

A FEW YEARS LATER I HAD A MORE SERIOUS PROBLEM WITH AIRWAY BLOCKAGES AND THAT WAS WHEN THE DOCTORS REALIZED I HAD **POST-POLIO SYNDROME**. I WAS TREATED VERY WELL BY MANY DOCTORS. THIS WAS OVER TWENTY YEARS AGO, AND I HAVE TRIED TO COME BACK FROM THE PROBLEM, BUT ITS NOT WORKING. SINCE THEN WITH AGE ADDITIONAL NEW PPS PROBLEMS: WEAKNESS, POOR MOTOR SKILLS, AND BREATHING HAVE MADE ME REALIZE I NEEDED TO TAKE EARLY RETIREMENT. I HAD WORKED FOR OVER 43 YEARS WITH MY DISABILITY, AND OTHER THINGS IN MY PERSONAL LIFE WERE TOUGH AS WELL. I SANK INTO A DEEP DEPRESSION. AFTER ALL, PART OF THE PROBLEM **WAS** IN MY HEAD-DAMN IT. MY EMOTIONAL HEALTH WAS WORSE THAN MY PHYSICAL HEALTH. I WAS HOPELESSLY SPIRALING DOWN IN DESPAIR FEELING USELESS AND MISUNDERSTOOD. I HAD BECOME DISABLED AND I HATED IT. I DO NOT KNOW IF OTHERS WENT THROUGH SIMILAR FEELINGS. PEOPLE WITH STRONGER SPIRITUAL FAITH MAY BE ABLE TO HANDLE IT BETTER THAN I DID. I DID NOT WANT PEOPLE TO FEEL SORRY FOR ME BUT I NEEDED BOTH PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT. I JOINED MANY POST-POLIO SUPPORT GROUPS IN FLORIDA. IT'S GREAT TO MEET LOTS OF OTHER POLIO SURVIVORS. IT'S GOOD TO SHARE AND FIND WE ARE NOT ALONE. WE CAN IDENTIFY WITH EACH OTHER AND WE SEEM TO LAUGH A LOT WHICH IS SO HEALTHY. I KNOW ITS ALWAYS THE BEST MEDICINE FOR ME!
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ANTI-DEPRESSANT PILLS ARE NOT FOR ME . I TRIED MEDICATION BUT WHAT I LIKE MOST IS PRAYING . I CAN SPILL MY GUTS TO A PERSON IN CONFIDENCE WHO MOSTLY LISTENS BUT WHO WILL MAKE ME THINK A DIFFERENT WAY . EXPRESSING MYSELF HELPS ME WORK THROUGH IT . MY EMOTIONAL HEALTH IS BETTER WHEN I SOCIALIZE WITH PEOPLE . I HAVE ALSO STOPPED TRYING TO PRETEND TO BE NORMAL . I DO NOT HIDE THE FACT THAT I AM A POLIO SURVIVOR ! I DO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF A DISABLED PARKING SPOT , AND USE A SCOOTER SINCE 1994 . I HAVE JUST ABOUT GIVEN UP TRYING WALK ON MY CRUTCHES . MY LAST FALL WAS EIGHT CLAMPS IN THE BACK OF MY HEAD . I DO NOT BELIEVE IT IS WRONG TO ASK FOR SOME HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT , ALTHOUGH I HAVE BEEN PRETTY INDEPENDENT MOST OF MY LIFE .

OCCASIONALLY I GET A BAD ATTITUDE BUT I THINK I HAVE COME TO TERMS WITH MY POST-POLIO SYNDROME . IT'S JUST A PART OF MY LIFE BUT DOESN'T HAVE TO STOP ME DOING EVERYTHING . INSIDE THIS P P S BODY THE SAME PERSON IS STILL LIVING MY LIFE QUITE WELL . I HAVE LEARNED TO TAKE EACH OBSTACLE AS A CHALLENGE TO OVERCOME AND SHARING HELPS A LOT . IT'S IMPORTANT NOT TO TAKE LIFE TOO SERIOUSLY AND TO BE ABLE TO LAUGH AT YOURSELF .