

ONE DAY AT A TIME

COMMUNITY OF UNDERSTANDING

I HAVE ACCEPTED THE FACT THAT LIFESTYLE CHANGES, PACING OF ACTIVITIES AND TAKING RESTS ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS TO RELIEVE THE SYMPTOMS OF POST-POLIO SYNDROME. IT HAS BEEN SHOWN THAT UPPER EXTREMITY COMPLAINTS OFTEN RESULT FROM OVERUSE OF SHOULDER AND ARM MUSCLES. USUALLY POST POLIO SYNDROME PATIENTS HAVE SUCCESSFULLY LEARNED TO DENY THEIR SYMPTOMS FROM CHILDHOOD AND TO ACHIEVE A "NORMAL" LIFE. THEREFORE THEY MAY HAVE GREAT DIFFICULTY WITH ADAPTING THEIR LIFESTYLES TO THEIR DECREASING ABILITIES AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT MAY BE INDICATED.

"DON'T MAKE SUCH A BIG DEAL OUT OF IT!" I KNOW THAT'S WHAT THEY WANT TO SAY TO ME. THIS PPS ADJUSTMENT STUFF BOMBARDS ME WITH A LOT OF NOISY VOICES IN MY HEAD IN MY MOMENTS OF SANITY, I KNOW THAT MY FRIENDS WANT TO SEE ME ADJUST HAPPILY TO MY NEW LIFESTYLE, BUT THEY HAVE NO WAY OF UNDERSTANDING WHY IT CAN BE SO HARD. THEIR CONFUSION ABOUT MY EMOTIONAL CRISIS ONLY CAUSES ME TO QUESTION AND PUNISH MYSELF EVEN MORE. HAVE I RESORTED TO PAMPERING MYSELF? DOES MY PPS FATIGUE AND PAIN REALLY EXIST, OR HAVE I "WILLED IT" TO HAPPEN I HAVE A SNEAKY SUSPICION THAT I AM NOT THE ONLY ONE TO ASK MYSELF THESE QUESTIONS.

FOR THE LAST TEN YEARS I HAVE BEEN WATCHING MYSELF WORK THROUGH THIS EMOTIONAL CRISIS.

PEOPLE SAY TO ME, "SO. YOU CAN'T DO AS MUCH AS YOU USED TO. THAT'S NOT SO BAD. MANY OTHER PEOPLE ARE WORSE OFF THAN YOU ARE. JUST BE HAPPY YOU CAN DO WHAT YOU DO." I TELL MYSELF THAT THEY ARE RIGHT, AND I CRITICIZE MYSELF FOR FEELING UPSET. OH, YEAH.

THAT MAKES EVERYTHING OKAY. RIGHT? HAH!!!

I CONFESS. I COULDN'T MAKE THESE EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENTS BY MYSELF. I HAVE LEARNED TO UNDERSTAND THINGS ABOUT MY FRIENDS. THEY ARE DOING THE BEST THEY CAN AT UNDERSTANDING AND ARE TRYING TO BE HELPFUL IN EVERY WAY THAT THEY CAN. THEY ACCEPT ME THE WAY I AM.

NOW, I CAN LET UP ON MYSELF A LITTLE AND SAY, OKAY, NOT EVERYONE IS GOING TO UNDERSTAND BUT THEY DON'T NEED TO. I WILL GET THROUGH THIS PERIOD OF ADJUSTMENT AND WILL COME OUT ON THE OTHER SIDE A LOT STRONGER THAN I HAVE BEEN THUS FAR IN MY LIFE-I HOPE. ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS THAT I CAN ACCEPT THAT NOW IS BECAUSE I KNOW AT LEAST THIRTY OTHER POLIO SURVIVORS WHO DO UNDERSTAND WHY IT IS SO HARD BECAUSE IT HAS BEEN HARD FOR THEM, TOO. THE MOST IMPORTANT BENEFIT OF A SUPPORT GROUP IS A COMMUNITY OF UNDERSTANDING WORK'S FOR ME!!!