Inside the Body Wilds: PAIN, by Lisa Geiszler (USA)

Inside The Body Wilds: The Reality of Life with a Chronic Illness

At Living ME, we believe that energy is life. For those living with energy-limiting chronic illnesses, how much energy we have determines not just what we can do, but how we experience the everyday moments that make life meaningful. In the preceding Pacing 101, we explored practical strategies for conserving and managing energy. Now, we invite you to dive deeper—into the stories that bring these challenges to life in a more personal way.

In this segment, we share three powerful reflections that illuminate life inside the body of chronic illness. Una Hearne's essay, **"In the Red,"** compares the relentless drain of chronic fatigue to a phone running on low charge, offering a poignant metaphor for energy depletion. In **"Pain: An Off-Tune Orchestra,"** (Lisa, USA) we take a raw and evocative look at the physical and emotional toll chronic pain exacts. Finally, **"Drifting Away"** (Josh Bean, Canada) brings us into the profound stillness and isolation of life with severe illness, a perspective rarely shared yet deeply important.

These narratives remind us that while our illnesses may differ—whether ME/CFS, dysautonomia (POTS), fibromyalgia, MCAS, or others—the shared threads of resilience and adaptation connect us all. We hope these stories resonate with you, and we invite submissions from writers in the chronic illness community. If your experience echoes the themes in this section or offers new perspectives, we'd love to hear from you. With your input, we will continue to expand the conversation as we increase awareness.
Reach us at **LivingME@wildflowerwisdoms.com** with the subject line **Inside the Wilds** to share your story or connect further

Pain

Pain swallows my day. I overdid it. Again. By overdid it I mean, I had a good day, so I went outside to lay in the sun, walked a short distance (seven steps) to the camellia bushes to cut three flowers, took the garbage out and folded a small load of laundry. In other words, not much.

It's a burning throb: my body an off-tune orchestra. The joints are the violins, with loud screeching solos. The bones keep the beat—a steady throb I can keep time to. The muscles, a loud and buzzy sax. The skin is the rest of the wind section, sensitive to every breeze and noise.

Whole body pain is exhausting. I spend the entire day in bed. It makes my limbs feel heavy, like they're full of molten lead. It hurts to move. It hurts to lie still. Anti-inflammatories don't help. I try and distract myself from the constant throbbing flame.

Part of the difficulty is that the pain is so widespread. I search my body, part by part, for an area, any area, that is not in pain: usually, it's my left earlobe and the bottom of my right foot. Usually, the pain lasts three days. By day two, I am a cauldron of pain, whispering incantations into the void, begging for relief. But I know, from too much experience, that time and rest are the only things that will help.

Pain is subjective. There are no instruments to determine level of pain (even as my blood pressure goes up). Doctors often don't believe the level of pain I'm in or how widespread it is. They think I'm exaggerating or, because I'm a woman, hysterical. If you're a Black woman, you're disbelieved more. (If I could design a medical instrument, it would be one which allows doctors to feel the exact nature of my pain. Hello Star Trek.)

When I haven't overdone it (read: spent twenty-three hours in bed), I still live with a heavy burning ache, mostly in my joints and bones. It's part of living with ME.

Lisa, USA, 2024