

It is all about **U**



MY STORY:

From Health Crisis to Health Coach

How 12 months of declining health led me from thinking I'd need a heart transplant to *realizing I had a new purpose.*

JULY 2000

My Heart Diagnosis

In July 2000, I was a busy utility company executive with two teenage daughters when I began having fatigue, shortness of breath, and hot and cold flashes. This led to a battery of tests and a diagnosis of idiopathic dilated cardiomyopathy.

At age 47, I traveled a lot for work and to visit and help my ailing sister in Dallas, who later died of breast cancer. If I didn't start taking a lot of medications, I would end up on the heart transplant list.

And so, my journey with heart disease began. The doctor prescribed multiple medications that increased in dosage over months and years. Fortunately, the medications worked for nearly 20 years. I also used an asthma inhaler as needed for occasional asthma attacks.

Idiopathic Dilated Cardiomyopathy

This heart condition includes an enlarged heart and reduced efficiency for pumping blood. This often causes fainting, shortness of breath and fatigue.

- Enlarged heart
- 30% blood pumping capacity
- Limits delivery of nutrition
- Multiple medications require close monitoring as doses increase
- If medications fail, a heart transplant is the only treatment



MID 2019

A Gradual Decline in My Health

In 2019, I was providing executive consulting and coaching and running a compliance business. Over the course of several months, I had been declining, but my husband and I brushed it off as situational—too active, too hot, too much stress, etc. Everyone around me was concerned.

But deep down we knew something was wrong.

We talked about the future...about the possibility that I may be placed on the heart transplant list...about final plans.

Now that I was 20 years older, and 70 lbs overweight, I was no longer the ideal candidate for a transplant, which was still the only treatment available for my condition.

JANUARY 2020

Hitting Rock Bottom

HEALTH CRISIS Day 1—Fainting

After a noticeable decline in my energy and health over the holidays, I began fainting frequently and suddenly. I went into the hospital where my blood pressure, laying down, was only 90/50. Believing that the numerous medications and high doses were responsible, the doctors cut my medications in half. That didn't help. We started thinking the worst was about to happen.

HEALTH CRISIS Day 2—Off All Meds

I continued to faint and go downhill, so the doctor took me completely off all medications. He told me there were no new drugs that could solve this issue and help my heart issue. So, my meds

stopped. To safeguard me against falling, I wasn't allowed to leave the carpeted area without assistance. I'd need more tests, but I could barely function mentally or physically.

HEALTH CRISIS

Day 3—Health Team Assigned

I was admitted to the hospital and assigned a team of a hospital specialist, Mayo Clinic expert and my cardiologist. I'd only had simulated stress tests in the past, but the team ordered me to redo them "for real" on the treadmill. Keep in mind, I was no longer medicated and couldn't walk 12 feet without assistance!

HEALTH CRISIS

Day 4—Heart Stress Test & Catheter

Here was the plan for this day—a day I dreaded, but one that went much differently than we expected.

- Stress test on treadmill with assistance
- *Yes, I stumbled, but they caught me!*
- Heart catheter-style test to evaluate volume of blood being pumped through the heart.

RESULTS: Although heart size and pumping force had not changed, somehow it was pumping the blood volume of a normal person. Unbelievably, the cardiologist said:

The cells in the right side of my heart changed at the mitochondrial level.

They transformed and were doing the work of the right and left side of the heart!

Unraveling the Mystery

I would return home with no medication. He said I'd feel better as the medications worked their way out of my system, but the mystery remained:

WHAT CHANGED IN 2019?

- It wasn't my weight, which had maintained at about 70 lbs overweight for a decade.
- It wasn't exercise, because I consistently took 3-5k steps/day.
- It wasn't what I ate, because that hadn't changed.

In the conversation with the doctor, we went over the last year, and my husband piped up and asked, "What about your vitamins?"

That's right—I started taking natural supplements each morning and night starting in January 2019.

The doctor was very interested. I told him about the vitamin company's natural approach and how I figured it wouldn't hurt to take these supplements.

He researched it and found a new study, published that very month, that confirmed that these plant-based supplements enhance cell structure and performance. The study also mentioned their impact on:

- Cholesterol
- Blood pressure
- Chronic illness, such as asthma
- Free radicals

Free radicals? *I honestly thought they were made up!* The doctor set me straight—Unmitigated free radicals have a

role in causing aging, aging related illness and cancer. The supplements help the body get rid of them.

What Now? A New Approach

After three days, my medical team recommended the following:

- Go home and rest.
- Stop all heart medications.
- Stop using asthma inhalers, because you no longer have asthma.
- Maintain normal activities and diet while you recover.
- Keep taking the vitamin supplements

Back home, I felt better and better. My husband and I were fascinated and shocked by the results. Once again, my life had been upended by a heart issue, but this time, the result was a positive one.

I continued to improve, and in a follow up conversation with my cardiology team, two comments astounded me:

For every 1 pound of excess body weight:

- **Your heart has to pump 5 miles! 70 lbs overweight—you do the math! Every time your heart beats!**
- **Your lower body joints (hips, knees, ankles, etc.) feel an additional 4 pounds of pressure— do that math again!**



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JULY 2020

Inspired to Help Others Take Action

After initial progress on a weight loss journey, and with all I had been through, I was inspired to help others. I learned about the Mayo Clinic's Health and Wellness Coaching Certification.

With my past success in business coaching, I knew I would be good at it! I have always been action-oriented and accountability-focused.

Lessons Learned

In those few dark days of January 2020—as I went into the hospital thinking I was a step away from being on the heart transplant list—my eyes were opened.

- ***Find a physician that will listen to you.*** You have to advocate for yourself. Finding a healthcare provider who really listens to you is an important part of that!
- ***Effective non-pharmaceutical approaches are available to support your health.*** With or without medications, you could benefit from finding the right combination of supplements, stress relief and movement. For me, plant-based supplements worked wonders.

Not all vitamins are created equally...look for the patent.

- ***It's never too late to work toward being the healthiest you!*** I went through this crisis, which pushed me to become

healthier by shedding extra pounds. With that experience, I am excited to inspire others to move forward with their health goals, too!



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TODAY

I still cannot believe I thought I was on a path to the heart transplant list! With this new opportunity to live longer and better, I took health coach training from the Mayo Clinic in order to find a healthy approach to losing 70 lbs.

I was forcing my heart to pump an extra 5 miles for every extra pound!

It was time to give my heart a break by getting back to coaching basics of mindset and habits along with the keys to nutrition. Now, I can help others through their unique health issues.

Whatever you do, whatever you are going through, don't give up!

Ask questions and seek help and accountability for your activities. Setting and achieving goals is much easier with someone to support you!

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