



An Introductory Sample of the Book...

Living with chronic illness is not easy and most feel helpless when dealing with constant pain, loss of body function and navigating the endless medications, procedures and doctor visits of their diagnosis.

Rebecca questions the belief that conventional medicine is the only option for treating chronic illness, how not to allow illness to define your life, and instead embrace a lifestyle centered on self-care, listening to the body, reducing toxins, and utilizing holistic remedies to manage symptoms – all which support the body's natural ability to heal itself.

Rebecca Renck

HEALING HABITS:

How to Help Your Body Heal Itself from Chronic Illness

An Introductory Sample of the Book...

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Healing as defined in this book is not a medical or scientific term. Rather, it's the body's natural ability to produce healthy cells that function optimally in their intended roles.

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INTRODUCTION

**the cruelest part of disease is not the pain it brings,
but the way it steals tomorrow's promise**

Being diagnosed with a chronic illness is a hard blow in our lives. There is no good time to be sick. There is no good time to be unable to care for our loved ones or not participate fully in life's activities. There is no good time to feel like a victim of a disease, to live with debilitating or restrictive symptoms, or have no one understand that the pain is NOT in your head but your body. And to make the blow even more on target, it usually comes when we are at our prime; at a time when things are going well in our lives: athletes rising to the top of their game, college students studying for their dream career, entrepreneurs finally showing a profit, moms finding a rhythm in the daily busy-ness. Chronic illness can affect anyone at any time.

Chronic illnesses have a significant impact on the American population, with approximately 60 percent of adults living with at least one diagnosed condition, and 40 percent of those managing two or more. These illnesses include what are now common diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, mental health disorders, and over eighty types of autoimmune diseases. Chronic illness is the leading cause of death and disability in the US and contributes to 75 percent of the nation's healthcare spending. The healthcare industry, including the cost of medical treatments, medications, insurance, and the sheer numbers of patients put a strain not only on the country's economics, but personal finances as well. These disheartening truths point to a chronically ill society that has been created in less than sixty years.

How did the health of our bodies become an industry with a significant portion of our nation's economy (personal and government) struggling with or, in some cases, profiting from pharmaceutical, insurance, and medical care? When and why did medical health care transmute into disease care? With all the advances in medical science, why are these diseases becoming increasingly prevalent to the point of being considered common?

There are exceptions due to genetic predispositions or injuries, and I am not downplaying or referring to those situations in any way, but for the average person who is diagnosed with a disease with no other qualifiers, we must ask ourselves: how did we get to this point? Is Western conventional medicine failing us, or are we failing ourselves by how we take care of our bodies? Are our culture, foods, and lifestyle literally making us sick?

**isn't it frustrating that even with all the
advancements in medicine,
as a society we are sicker than ever?**

Chronic disease can be defined as a long-lasting condition that persists for a year or more, requires ongoing medical attention or limits activities of daily living, and can be managed but not cured. These illnesses often

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result from a combination of genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors, and they affect multiple body systems requiring continuous care and management.

Chronic illnesses develop in our bodies over time; they are not caught like a cold, nor do they typically stem directly from infection or viruses. By the time symptoms are severe enough to garner our attention, the illness is usually in full rampage. The body has been stressed enough in some way, shape, or form by a root cause that it can no longer function as it was meant to, and this leads to the chronic symptoms experienced.

The human body is an intricate and interconnected system where every organ, tissue, and cell together play a vital role in maintaining overall health and function, rather than operating as isolated parts. This holistic perspective emphasizes that healing and well-being rely on looking at the body as a whole, rather than focusing solely on individual symptoms or areas.

If we combine the thoughts that the body has the ability to heal itself and is a complex interconnected system that has been overwhelmed by outside factors, common sense leads me to believe that by identifying and addressing the root causes, a chronically ill body has a good chance to heal.

We have all seen evidence of the natural ability to heal from a cut, a broken bone, a cold virus, or from infection without much intervention. There are also tens of thousands of examples of those who reversed cancer, overcame disabilities, and successfully managed chronic illnesses. Giving the body a chance heal is not only possible but doable.

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I am disheartened by the amount of disease I see today, and you should be too. The over-reliance on medications and surgeries thrown at a patient for treatment without cause or outcome is unacceptable, and the best thing we can do for ourselves is to take our health into our own hands. By demanding to know the reason why you feel like hell, you will start asking questions, and with questions come answers.

Conventional medicine may have very few answers to offer you, BUT if you ask these questions of yourself and of your own body, you will get some very useful information. Your body, through conscious intuition, can tell you how the things we unknowingly or (by throwing caution to the wind) knowingly do in our daily life, such as what toxins we expose ourselves to, what we eat, and stress over, all can be root causes of our problem. By questioning your current habits and consciously acknowledging what and why you do what you do, you receive not only some usable answers, but also a starting point. To receive a different outcome, you need to do something different, and the exciting part is that each day offers a fresh start. You have the opportunity to do something, everything, or nothing different each day that will either support or continue to harm your body. The choice is yours.

This book is about how you can tap into that natural healing ability to your advantage. To embrace the belief that the body can heal itself, you only need to provide the correct environment; the body will take care of the

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rest. I would like to make the argument that no matter where you are starting from today, with awareness, knowledge, and healthier lifestyle habits, it is within anyone's capability to accomplish good health. The following pages describe the principles and habits I stumbled into over the last thirty-four years that I have found supported my disease (health) management and helped my body to heal itself. There are no outlandish ideas or new-fangled therapies, just things many of us do each day that, when given the proper twist of perspective and attention, can be used to our advantage.

Managing my chronic illnesses, I developed a lifestyle that supported feeling good and reduced not only the symptoms, but also the amount of disease in my body. This was accomplished with minimal medical intervention and certainly without the full blanket of standard medical protocol routinely prescribed.

My story may seem exceptional, but that is only because something inside me would not let me accept the situations I found myself in when presented with a disease and its prognosis. I am here to give you permission, hand you the tools, then give an encouraging push for you to see that being diagnosed and then living with a chronic illness is not the dire ending we believe it to be. My solution was to understand what the symptoms were telling me, adjust my habits, and create a sustainable lifestyle. While medical intervention is sometimes necessary, the reality is that chronic illnesses are better managed over time through lifestyle changes—an area where you hold the ultimate authority.

The book is structured into four chapters and twenty healing principles and habits. It begins with a basic overview of the essential aspects of a healthy lifestyle and emphasizes the importance of making conscious decisions. Each healing principle is paired with a practical healing habit, offering actionable examples and suggestions to help you transform your behaviors and build habits that promote sustainable good health. By embracing these principles with the right perspective and putting in a small amount of effort to develop new habits, you will find yourself on a journey to:

1. See improvement in your symptoms
2. Experience empowerment in self-care
3. Gain a practical tool set and roadmap for sustainable health, and
4. Help your body heal itself

This book is your guide to unlocking your body's natural healing potential, one habit at a time. By doing so, you can cultivate the mindset needed to understand that both you and your lifestyle are shaped by your behaviors and habits.

CHAPTER 1

A DISEASE ARRIVED ON MY DOORSTEP

I grew up in a healthy family during the sixties and seventies in the clear mountain air of Colorado, and by most standards had a good childhood. We ate home cooked, well-rounded meals right off the food pyramid that circulated in the sixties and sparingly enjoyed the prepackaged, prepared frozen dinners that were all the rage at the time. I was involved in scouting, book clubs, and social groups.

When I was diagnosed with Crohn's disease at thirty, I had been happily married for nine years, had four young children, had lost a quarter of my normal body weight, and was so malnourished that walking up a short flight of stairs had me sitting and resting at the top. Eating an orange had me doubling over in pain, and VHS videos had become the babysitter of my young ones while I lay on the couch. Going out of the house to eat or participate in any activity was a cause of pain, embarrassment, or struggle. I had no idea how I had gotten to this point of ill health, only that my symptoms had worsened over several months to the point where I had to admit that something was not right.

I am not sure (after being mis-diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis and the flu) how I came across the female internal medicine doctor, but she put me in the hospital, did the correct tests, and finally diagnosed my malady as Crohn's disease. I remember her as somewhat of an angel. As most of the acute symptoms subsided, I was ecstatic in the prednisone drug-induced high,—thinking all my problems were solved and I was on the road to good health. I quickly realized the fallacy in the belief that feeling better equaled being healed when my angel doctor informed me that I had a chronic disease with no cure that would only get worse with time and included a possible surgery within five years.

Medications in 1990 were limited and I was allergic to two of them, leaving not much in the way of conventional medicine to manage my disease short of the promised surgery and some lifestyle changes. There was no book on what those lifestyle changes meant other than 'maybe it is the food you are eating.' Considering at the time I was not eating anything that didn't cause distress, that only fueled my frustration. As my heart sank lower and lower, I realized that my real issues with this disease had just begun.

I felt very lost, alone, and scared, but I see this now as the catalyst to how I was able to adopt an 'outside of the box' thinking. There were no real answers, so I needed to find some. A 'disease' came as a surprise to me, as I had never been exposed to anyone so chronically ill. I had no references, so I had no illusions about what conventional medicine could or could not do or even if I should follow the limited protocol available. Going to the doctor until then had consisted of prenatal and childcare appointments, all normal 'health care' related, and none requiring any lifelong management.

I was not a fan of the medication and its side effects or the surgery prognosis and soon found myself refusing to believe that those treatments were even a long-term option for me. Even with the pain and acute symptoms I was experiencing, an independent nature surfaced, and I made the decision that if the disease was manageable, I was going to try to manage it with as little medical intervention as possible. I was lucky to have the support of my 'angel doctor' who opened my eyes to the importance of taking care of myself with

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some alternative therapies, and honestly just looking outside that conventional medicine box. I had no idea how I was going to accomplish managing this illness or what it would look like over my lifetime, but I vowed to find a way and give it my best shot.

The path I ultimately followed was not wholly conventional or wholly holistic. There was no roadmap, and it certainly contained a lot of trial and error as I drew from a combination of the two modalities. But I can say that, just like most things in life, the end result has been well worth the struggle and well worth the effort. I am healthier today than I have ever been, and looking back it was much less of a struggle than the treatments I have seen my fellow patients undergo.

I found a grace in taking care of myself that I did not know was missing.

I found continued confidence in my intuition.

I found strength in my mind and body that served me well,

And I found the truth that when allowed,

The body can heal itself.

I wrote my first book in 2015, Live Healthy with Crohn's Disease, and during the writing phase, many of my symptoms suddenly flared up. Reliving the struggle, pain, shame, and personal resolve I had endured brought up so many emotions. I realized how much trauma I had been through and had yet to release. The book was therapeutic in that regard. I realized full force that I had lived much of my life keeping my illness a secret. Due to shame and fear, only my closest family and friends knew I had been diagnosed with a disease. The inner call to write and help others with my story was having a direct confrontation with that fear of trying not to be seen.

Within months of that time, I felt an intuitive nudge to have a mammogram and was diagnosed with breast cancer. As prevalent as cancer is, it was not something I had personally dealt with within my family sphere, and I was again thrust into an unknown world. After having the small tumor removed, I made the decision to refuse the eighteen months of 'preventative' drugs, chemo, and radiation prescribed by two oncologists and instead relied on the surgeon's evaluation that the cancer had been removed with the surgery. Having already managed a disease for over twenty-five years, and with a strong belief in the body being able to heal itself, I again summoned faith in and listened to my body. The realization hit me again of how much our buried emotional issues and day-to-day habits can play out as illness in our bodies. I pivoted, improved my lifestyle habits, looked at how I was showing up in my relationships, learned all I could about holistic cancer treatments and find myself, now over ten years later, still cancer free. I have not neglected scheduling routine check-ups and tests, and it has been gratifying to see that my healthy lifestyle habits have worked in so many instances.

I do not believe that my story is unique in having been diagnosed with these unfortunately common diseases. I do believe it is unique in how I managed them, my decisions made against the conventional norm and mindset, and belief in myself above all others. I still have Crohn's disease and I still have cancer, but I refuse to let my identity be of a diseased victim and I refuse to live my life in worry, pain, and suffering. I have weeks that I eat too much sugar, I have months where the role of caretaker and losing a family member robs me of sleep, I stress over money, and cringe over the world we are leaving our grandchildren. I also eat well, am creative, enjoy my work, and love spending time with children helping them to see the world with awe and

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wonder. I help, hope, and find glimmers everywhere I go. In short, I have developed an identity of balancing the stressful modern world we live in with taking care to supply my body with what it needs to thrive—both physically and emotionally.

If you are still breathing and if your heart is still beating, then you have the power of choice— the authority—in how you live and look at your life. We are not just the creators of our lives, but the architect. An ‘architect’ embodies not only the creative role but also the visionary, the builder, the collaborator, the planner, and the supervisor of their designs. You are the architect of your life. You can decide how sick you want to be.

***“When you let go of who you are,
you become who you might be”—RUMI***

CHAPTER 2

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO HELP A BODY HEAL ITSELF?

*The secret of health for both body and mind
is to live in the present moment wisely and earnestly.*

—Buddha

As commonplace as disease is in our society, it is still always a shock when you face a diagnosis yourself. And whether you are familiar with others who have chronic illnesses or like in my case, you have no idea what to expect, it takes on a different level when it becomes personal. You may have felt something amiss in your own body for some time or it may have come as a complete surprise. You may have been living with symptoms that came sporadically, then more frequently, and finally disrupting your life so dramatically that you had no option but to acknowledge and face the fear that something was terribly wrong.

No matter how your story has unfolded or where you find yourself, know that you are not alone, and others have been just where you are now. The diagnostic process of any chronic illness is often difficult, and it typically takes anywhere from six months to several years to receive a true diagnosis, and often with several misdiagnoses in between. Unfortunately, many go from doctor to doctor and have been ill for so long that pain and a low quality of life have become a normal, everyday struggle, and women especially by this time have multiple diseases flaring. If you have received an accurate diagnosis, you may now be excited and feel the worst is over much like I did. There is an answer, BUT over time you begin to wonder what it truly means for you. What is the prognosis for a disease that doctors have identified but have no cure for? What does manageable really involve?

Life with a chronic illness is not easy, but it can be managed by reducing symptoms and allowing space for your body to heal. This book is about what ‘managing’ your disease takes. It is about what it means to release damaging habits to create space for new healing habits. It is about how to embody those habits into a healing lifestyle. It is about how to create an identity that sees you as the healthy person that supports your body to help heal itself. It is to remind you of the power you have over your life to be anything you want to be, and that includes being healthy and happy.

My experience of having controlled my Crohn’s disease and then sustained a remission from breast cancer have led me to the awareness that choices I made in my daily life either helped reduce symptoms and supported healing OR contributed to my illness, my symptoms, and my overall ill health. The sustainable healing choices all stemmed from healthy lifestyle habits that I developed over time. By taking responsibility for my health and by my willingness to make different choices, I was able to change the trajectory of disease in my body.

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

This is a call to take care of yourself, to take responsibility for you. It is a call to denounce a total reliance on conventional Western medicine, its blanket protocols and disease management with only drugs and surgeries and instead work in tandem with your healthcare provider. (While medications and testing have their place, it is the reliance on only the medical system to manage your illness that needs to be addressed.) This current system of care does not see the body as an interconnected machine or as a whole person with a lifestyle and emotions and tends to treat just whatever particular symptom a person is experiencing. It is your job to not only get out of this conventional box but to identify, implement, and embody the healing that can be achieved on your own. This process is easier now than it has ever been.

There is a flood of easily accessible information related to how the body works, alternative healing, plant medicine, energy modalities, or even how specific foods can help or hurt the body by causing inflammation. Helping the body to heal by using holistic alternatives in tandem with conventional Western medicine is not a new idea, but to make it all work for you, you must first take responsibility for your own health.

A responsibility to oneself is the first step in your personal disease management and is a two-part process. Step one is acknowledging that you have a hand in this disease that has developed in your body, and step two is understanding that you have the power to undo what has been done. As I mentioned before, most chronic illnesses develop in our bodies gradually over time, and given the right environment, the body has the ability to heal. (This may not be the case where there is permanent damage or surgeries to internal organs, but symptoms typically fall under this premise.) Your determined actions will make all the difference in your sustainable healing process. Be more concerned about where you are going from this day forward than where you have been.

In your healing journey, you will need to acknowledge where you are today and what got you here, to identify and admit what your role has been in the development of disease in your body, to look at your lifestyle, and to learn the ways to reverse the root causes.

You are the one in control and good choices will have good results, continued bad choices will get you literally more symptoms; more illness. In short, you can decide how sick and how much pain you want to be in. It is time to take responsibility and make some improvements for your own health and well-being.

**if you are sick and tired
of being sick and tired,
take the leap of faith to follow a new path.**

YOU ARE NEVER PAST THE POINT OF NO RETURN

Taking responsibility for your healing begins with accepting where you are today and acknowledging that your lifestyle has contributed to the problem. It is equally important to not beat yourself up over past decisions, whether made knowingly or unknowingly, and to recognize that there is always a path forward.

The bad news is that you have been diagnosed with a disease. The good news is no matter where you are in your diagnosis, you are not past the point of no return.

Your body is in a constant state of repair and renewal, ridding itself of dead cells and growing new cells each moment of each day. In fact, the human body produces over 3 million new cells per second to support, repair, and replace old, damaged cells. Cells are replacing areas of the body in varying speeds from a few seconds to days, and it is this remarkable regenerative capacity that gives credence to the idea that with the correct environment, the body can heal.

If no other factors change, diseased cells reproduce diseased cells, but when you can interrupt that process with supportive environments, you create conditions for healthy cells to thrive, which leads to healthy cells reproducing healthy cells. This holistic approach not only interrupts the cycle of disease but actively promotes healthy regeneration.

I believe all illnesses and diseases are a good thing in your life, a wakeup call, a blessing. A person could argue that any symptom that is outside perfect health is not a good thing, BUT you need to realize that blessings do not always have to feel good. Would you have taken action to stop the hectic pace or not eat processed foods before you got sick, knowing they were not good for you? Would you have changed your bad sleep habits for a good routine without a reason? Of course not, and that is okay. It is human nature to follow the norm and the path of least resistance. Be assured everyone has a disease—most people just don't know it yet.

GET DOWN AND DIRTY WITH THE ROOT CAUSES OF THE DIS-EASE

As you take responsibility for where you are today, you can begin to identify root causes. You can then learn what you need to learn and do what you need to do to eliminate these causes to create that healing environment. Every new piece of information and step forward helps to define a new normal lifestyle tailored just for you and will eventually lead to a sustainable remission. This requires an open mind, looking outside the box, trusting your instincts about things you are doing today, and a willingness to do things differently. It is an act of rebellion against the normal way of doing things, but one that will empower you.

Advanced research is now pointing to genetics and linking the gut microbiome as a root cause of many autoimmune diseases and chronic illnesses, but while an important piece, it isn't the complete answer.

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Treating a disease with only one focus isn't looking at the whole person or picture.

Habits and lifestyle include not only physical activity and symptoms but also the emotional, spiritual, and soulful essence of what makes you the person you are. If it is true that you are more than the sum of your physical parts, then so are the root causes of your illness. Common sense tells us there must be more than one reason the body went on a tirade.

A lifestyle is the culmination of the multitude of moments created by decisions, feelings, reactions, and habits. How we treat and feel about ourselves, deal with negativity, feed our cells, enjoy our time with others, the perception we have of our body, what we eat, when we rest, our purpose, and our values are just some examples of how interwoven the tapestry of our lives are. We are the sum of our parts energetically, and helping the body to heal itself means healing all of you. This is not about changing a few physical habits; it is seeing the root causes that conventional medicine seems to ignore, and those are about seeing the whole of you.

Each principle talks about physical and emotional aspects of life and how that relates to being a possible root cause. The ideas for habits to look at, change, improve on, or develop also should be looked at with how they apply to the whole of you. For instance, changing how you eat is not only about buying different groceries. You need to identify where the habits of what you eat come from: is it because you value convenience? Is it cultural? Do you hide behind foods or treat them as comfort? Is it social prestige? The 'whys' are just as important to identify as the 'whats'.

As I became more aware of my own habits, I knew without a doubt there were ways I was not taking the best care of myself. I believe that if you are here now, you also feel there are ways you could take better care of yourself and realize there is at least one habit or more that has become a root cause of the illness, and that it would help to eliminate such habits.

PROVIDE THE CORRECT ENVIRONMENT

It is often said that you become a reflection of the five people you spend the most time with. This concept can also be extended to the environment you surround and immerse yourself in. Just as the people closest to you influence your thoughts, habits, and behaviors, so too does your environment. The spaces you frequent, the energy of the communities around you, and even the information you read, hear, and speak all play a significant role in defining who you are. Developing a healing environment for our cells to regenerate and our body to function optimally needs to be done as a combination of the physical and emotional environment we live in. To succeed in any area of change, your surroundings must align with your desired outcome. One without the other is less likely to create sustainable healing.

Our environment influences us as a framework that shapes our reactions. These reactions are often triggered by our surroundings, guiding us toward our next steps. For example, if you are trying to eat a healthier diet and your environment is filled with junk food—like chips on the counter and sugary drinks

in the refrigerator —you are more likely to grab these items out of convenience. In contrast, if your environment (kitchen or desk) is stocked with fresh fruits, nuts, and water prominently displayed, those healthier options become the natural choice. The environment you create will become your natural choice.

Redefining the environment that contributed to your illness may feel uncomfortable, as it challenges familiar routines, but it is a necessary step in building new healing habits. Creating a supportive environment means to prioritize restorative practices for the body to provide it with the raw material it needs to rebuild at the cellular level, practices such as adequate sleep, drinking enough water, eating anti-inflammatory and nutritious foods, and reducing stress and toxins that come from environmental pollutants, including processed foods.

To help your body heal, you must re-evaluate—and sometimes completely transform—your surroundings. Healing cannot thrive in a negative or unsupportive environment, and that unsupportive environment is the reality of where you are now. You must create a new environment that promotes healing and allows progress with less resistance and discomfort.

The principles in this book provide clear guidance on building a healing environment through intentional habits. By focusing on this essential concept and surrounding yourself with positive influences, you'll be well on your way to a healthier, more vibrant version of yourself.

CHAPTER 3

A PRODUCT OF YOUR HABITS

**Life habits do not change until your thinking does.
Shift your mindset, make it your identity, and everything else will follow.**

You and I are both the product of our personal habits. The habits that rule our daily actions can be our friend or enemy, working either for or against us. In the case of a diseased body, your habits have been working against you, so you need to look at how to make them work *for* you. Managing symptoms and helping your body to heal itself hinges on the fact you make changes to your lifestyle habits.

Habits are behaviors, or actions done automatically and typically without conscious thought. These can be good, bad, or neutral behaviors and as such can be good or bad or neutral for the body. Examples of good habits can be preparing good meals, drinking plenty of water, gratitude, mindfulness, planning and prioritizing your day, or simplifying your life. Bad habits can include overworking, lack of physical activity, smoking, and negative self-talk. Neutral habits are actions that don't create a strong emotional reaction or any undue stress on the body such as personal hygiene.

I would like to offer you some grace, as I believe that our auto-pilot, modern lifestyle is full of easy access to bad behaviors and habits that have become root causes of disease. I am convinced that, if asked, you would say that you did not develop these behaviors and habits to consciously poison your system, inflame your gut, or stress yourself out to the point of developing an overrun diseased body. With new awareness, it is your job to identify and replace your harmful behaviors and habits to redefine the environment that contributed to your illness into one that will help your body to heal.

CHANGING BEHAVIORS

In his book *Atomic Habits* by James Clear outlines three layers of how to change your behaviors to change your habits. I will not go into detail here but will paraphrase them to help you understand the challenge of going against the norm to change our lifestyle habits in relationship to helping your body to heal. I have found this to be a good concept to understand when dealing with any change—especially when dealing with chronic illness.

The first layer is trying to change your overall outcome. Outcome can be described as a goal or changing your overall result, - like feeling better.

The second layer is changing your process - your habits and routines—such as developing a new diet, sleep patterns, or reducing stress.

The third layer is changing your identity. This involves looking at your beliefs and self-image along with your judgements and assumptions about yourself and others to see how these affect your choices.

These three layers of behavior changes are principles that allow us to change our lifestyle habits and with specific purpose and correlate directly to our reversing our health issues. We can easily understand the goal of helping your body to heal and recognize the importance of identifying specific processes, but many of us overlook the fact that the greatest impact is from changing our identity.

AN EMPOWERED IDENTITY

I realized after making my decision to manage my disease, it was only just that—a decision—and while an important milestone, that was not getting me to any noticeable improvement in my health or giving me any concrete direction. I was making choices haphazardly and was unsure what improvements I needed or wanted. I hid my illness the best I could by not participating in many of the outside opportunities of everyday life and most importantly I did not really believe deep down that I had made the 'right' decision; - just a stubborn one.

After a very painful flare-up that left me bedridden for days, I realized that something had to change, and it wasn't about my decisions, rest, or diet. I took a deep breath and realized that if I truly wanted to get better, it wasn't about 'wishing' to be better, deciding to eat healthier, or just 'fixing' the flare-ups. It was about changing how I viewed myself and how I viewed my disease. I needed to see myself as the person I wanted to be.

Over the next few months, I worked on making small but meaningful physical changes and adopted a new attitude about healing. I practiced seeing myself as healthy and full of vibrant energy. I took time for myself each day and created routines to calm my anxiety, which I found mirrored my overactive immune system. I detoxed my life, ate clean foods, and set boundaries. Slowly but surely, the flare-ups became less frequent, and my energy returned in a more consistent and sustainable way, which was the beginning of the habits I eventually developed and share with you now. My disease was still present, but I now felt like I had more control, believed I was getting healthier, and saw myself as a healthy person doing things I wanted to do. During my next check-up, the doctor was surprised by my progress. "Whatever you're doing, keep it up."

Those words made me realize that I had changed my identity. I went from someone who fought against her disease haphazardly to someone who took care to make the correct choices. By proving to myself that I could heal myself with small wins, I became just what I wanted to be:—a person who could manage her disease by listening to her body and who had the power to stop any destructive habits. I was no longer the victim but the empowered healer.

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Your identity defines not only who you are, but who you can become. It is what shapes your thoughts, actions, and purpose. You will never get the wanted results in managing and healing your body if your identity remains that of a victim of a disease or someone who is not or ever will be healthy. Being a victim means you are stuck in feeling that circumstances are beyond your control, hold on to ‘why me’ thoughts, blame the government or the food manufacturers, or are too reliant on conventional medicine. Change in your identity comes when you move away from thinking like a victim and toward believing in your personal power. A healing mindset is about changing what you identify with.

I found the best way for developing a healing identity is a process of going within, listening to your body, understanding and accepting where you are now, and believing in your intuition. Through this process, you begin to see it is about YOU finding YOU in your core ideals and purpose. It is about taking a stand against the establishment, about being your own best friend, health advocate, and superhero. Your identity is knowing who you are and what you stand for.

When any habit becomes part of your identity, it becomes a force that will carry you unconsciously forward; whether it is with an unwanted decline of health or to help your body heal. (Friend or enemy; victim or empowered). The behaviors and thoughts that have currently defined you as a patient diagnosed with a disease and in ill health must be redefined with new behaviors, thoughts, and habits. A goal to help your body heal itself requires a responsibility to oneself to become that person. It is one thing to say, “I am someone who *wants* this,” it is very different thing to say, “I am a person who *is* this.”

Life habits do not change until your thinking does. Shift your mindset, make it your identity, and everything else will follow.

**it is one thing to say, “I am someone who *wants* this,”
it is very different thing to say,
“I am a person who *is* this.”**

MOMENT TO MOMENT: COMPOUNDING SMALL HABITS

There is an operations philosophy utilized in business called Kaizen that focuses on small continuous improvements. I worked for a company that successfully implemented this training and philosophy, and it was interesting to see the immediate results in how the work environment improved productivity while employees became more contented. The basic concept seemed to be counterintuitive when it was first presented, as the first step was not to identify a specific high-level goal but to have a low-level understanding of what frustrated the employees most in their areas and what changes they would make if they could. The second step in the process was to brainstorm ways to make the changes without it negatively affecting colleagues or productivity. Most of the improvements identified and then implemented were very small and were agreed upon by everyone. There were no grandiose remodels or even personnel changes asked for. Instead, it was things like ‘store the copy paper close to the copier,’ ‘answer emails only between 3:00 and

4:00 p.m.,’ ‘have an on-point fifteen-minute department meeting each morning instead of a weekly two-hour meeting when the issues are old and gone,’ or ‘being able to collaborate with other departments.’

All were easy changes to implement that made a difference in big ways and were paramount to reaching the high-level management goal. The goal was never really the impetus to drive the changed processes; it was the ability to make small improvements. When we apply this philosophy in our daily lives, we can see that it is easy to underestimate the effect of making continual small improvements that will garner big results.

Where your health is concerned, the small consistent changes which create improvement may seem to have very little impact on your symptoms at first. But compounded over time, the effects of the small changes become noticeable in a big way. In the example above, not much in terms of productivity would have changed if only the copier paper was relocated, but the compounding of all the small changes and the continual focus on improvement made a noticeable difference. The same holds true that small improvements in our environments and choices each day will go undetected until suddenly one day you realize the debilitating symptoms are no longer present, you feel better, and the disease is in remission. The reverse is also true, in that very little of the destruction happening in our bodies from inflammation or other root causes can be seen or even felt by us until it has compounded to a point you can’t ignore. Be assured that things are happening below the surface whether you can see the results or not; for good or ill.

Here is another example of the effect of small decisions. Consider this formula: If you improve just 1 percent each day, the compounding effect results in being nearly thirty-eight times better by the end of a year. Conversely, doing one thing worse each day will take you down to zero. Initially, there is no noticeable difference in the 1 percent better or worse, but over time, the compounding effects become not only noticeable but definitive. (I personally have been there and never want to hit zero again.)

I never want to hit zero again.

This principle of continual improvement can be applied to your life by adopting and compounding new healthy habits and releasing old unhealthy habits. I have found that everything related to success or failure comes down to the decisions made in the moment. You will have more success setting smaller milestones to work toward than having just an overall goal of ‘feeling better.’ Lifestyle healing habits are your smaller milestone goals to achieve success. Don’t get bogged down by the big picture when it is the moment-by-moment decisions that create small accomplishments that will make a sustainable difference.

In this moment, you may feel you are too sick to ever feel better again, but if you move one step forward, the momentum will begin to carry you toward the health you desire, moment by moment.

HOW DO YOU MAKE IT STICK?

There are very few of us who have not been introduced to a concept, idea, or improvement plan that we have started excitedly with every intention of success. Then, sometime later, we forget to practice, get to a place

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of resistance, or become disillusioned by slow results and quit. Despite our efforts and doing all the things, the end result can be a mediocre improvement or none at all. Our good intentions have given way to the path of least resistance, and we remain in our comfort zone. Unfortunately for us now, our comfort zone has made us sick. To move past where we are today and to not only rewire our mindset but create healthy lifestyle habits, we need to train our brain to think differently.

Building a new habit is about training yourself to create a new, consistent response to an event, thought, or action in the moment. An effective way this can be achieved is by attaching the new desired action (the habit we wish to develop) to something you already do. This takes advantage of your natural tendency to go from one familiar action to the next and is an example of “habit stacking,” made popular by James Clear in his aforementioned book, *Atomic Habits*. By being consciously aware of what your habits are in a situation and what you wish to accomplish, you will develop sustainable patterns.

For example, say you would like to create a habit of centering your thoughts with a breathing exercise. Each time you sit down at your desk, take three deep breaths and focus on what your current task is. By attaching the breaths to the routine action of sitting down at your desk, you will have more success in the breathing exercise. Another example might be that you want to develop a habit of gratitude each day. If each time you walk into a room you purposefully notice something or someone to appreciate, you will soon make it a habit. The act of noticing your surroundings each time they change will develop that new way of thinking. Attaching new habits to the old familiar behaviors will help improve your success but now let’s step it up and do it with intention.

Setting intentions is a common concept, yet an easily overlooked way of creating lasting, desired behaviors. In fact, it is an often-ignored activity in our ‘get it done’ society. You could say that *without intending to*, you have developed a lifestyle that has led to a chronic illness. Think about what you could do *with intention*.

Intention setting is the practice of clearly defining what you wish to accomplish by focusing on when, where, how, and/or why you carry out a particular action. Look at the previous example of sitting down at your desk and taking three breaths to build the habit of focus and centering your thoughts, and let’s add a why. “After I sit down at my desk, I will take three breaths and center my focus to be more productive with my time.”

The intention is identified in the why (focus and productivity) and is now attached to the known routine behavior of sitting at your desk. A new habit that can be attached to a routine behavior establishes that mental push but adding the intention will strengthen your commitment. This commitment of the intention is key in making the new habit more automatic and sustainable over time.

**the reality is that the lifestyle you have led,
The emotions you have held, and the beliefs that you have lived by
Have, in fact, gotten you to this place of dis-ease.
The promise is that today is the first day of the life you want!**

PRINCIPLE 1

THE DECISION—THIS IS YOUR GAME NOW

**It is in your moments of clarity
that pivotable decisions are made.**

When I came home from that first hospital visit in 1990, I told my husband the ‘angel doctor’ had recommended that we go to counseling to help navigate my chronic disease. His surprising response was that this was my problem, not his, and I needed to deal with it. Wait . . . what?

His stance (even though made in a loving way) made me just mad enough to stubbornly resolve to take care of myself if no one else was going to do it. Well, wasn’t that a revelation?! It was the best thing he could have done for me at that moment.

I felt the victim of my circumstance and old programming surfaced, which fed my initial response to rely on someone to fix me. I didn’t like feeling the victim any more than the stubborn anger. Even though it took time to change those mindsets, I realized over time that I really was the only one who could help my body heal itself. I found it was hard at first to look at myself and take responsibility, and I needed to practice making decisions for me. I had not consciously done anything wrong, was living how I had always lived, believed what I had always known and what was ‘normal.’ But normal wasn’t good enough anymore.

I felt blessed that if I had to have a disease, it was one considered to be manageable. And if this could be managed, then I was going to manage it. As those fateful shifts took hold, my mission took shape, and I began studying what might be causing my symptoms, how and why my body was reacting, and then identified how I could change those. Life does not stand still, and each day we are pushed to become the future selves we didn’t know we could become.

TRUST YOURSELF TO TAKE CARE OF YOU

A decision comes with responsibility. Are you willing to take responsibility for the dis-ease in your body? Are you ready to trust yourself enough to take care of yourself? If you are truly serious about making lasting change; if you believe that Western medicine has fallen short of not only managing your disease but helping you reverse this condition; if you have an ounce of belief in yourself, then today is the day to start trusting in you.

Putting trust in yourself is a giant leap of faith in our modern world. Less than 10 percent of humans will consciously take a step forward to depend on themselves, whether it be in business, relationships, or health. If one of your burning desires is to ‘help your body to heal itself’ then be one of those 10 percent—be the one who goes ALL IN.

Think about how we live in a society that teaches us to depend on others for our well-being and works tirelessly to convince us to believe that someone else knows best. We have been taught all our lives to take others’ direction and advice, and rarely are we allowed the freedom to listen to and act on our inner knowledge without recrimination—especially in the medical arena. Often, before we have even digested being diagnosed

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with a disease, we are sent down an unforgiving path of protocol including tests, medications, and surgeries; all the while ignoring that small voice inside that warns that these options may not be the best for us. Others may know scientifically more about your disease, but it is in listening to your intuition of what your body needs that can promote healing and should be honored. ONLY you can do that.

We all have an inner intelligence and intuition that serves us well, and it is wise to develop the art of listening to it and to TRUST in ourselves. You have the power to learn what you need to know, change your habits, and help your body to heal itself. I want to very clearly give you permission to speak up and TRUST IN YOU!

Truth be told, it came as no big surprise to me that when I decided to take responsibility to change my poor lifestyle habits, trust, and take care of myself (with helping my body as the objective), it changed not only my symptoms but my confidence and enthusiasm. I was no longer a victim but empowered. I could see the new me as the REAL me, living as my authentic self. My trust became a decision to be all that I could be, and for me that started with no longer suffering from symptoms of any disease.

Making the decision to take control of your health is a huge leap of faith. Insecurity can be a constant companion, so you need to **stay strong** and **decide** that you will do whatever it takes to help yourself and live the life you want. Use all means necessary within conventional medicine, holistic lifestyle habits, self-development courses, alternative therapies, and even Google searches to achieve your goal.

This decision to help yourself and take control of your own wellness path is not meant to put yourself on an island, just the opposite is true. We want to make ourselves an ally and colleague with our medical team in conjunction with taking an active 'leadership' role in managing our symptoms and illness. As I said, with a decision comes responsibility, and it is now time to step up into that role.

**It is your body, your life, and your disease to deal with.
No one knows better what is best for you than you.
If you continue to do what you've always done,
You will have what you have always had.**

HEALING HABIT 1: THIS IS YOUR GAME NOW

Emotions to develop: Inner strength, Determination

Emotions to be aware of: Imposter Syndrome, Victimization

Your healing starts with permission to become someone different; to create a new identity. Start with where you are today but *decide* who you want to be. Be open to change and break away from the crowd and the status quo. Realize that it may take undoing everything you have known, believed in, and been taught up to now. Take on that executive management role in your life and your health. This is your game now.

- Make a conscious, *out loud decision* that you are going to *take care of yourself* by helping your body to heal itself and do what it takes to make that sustainable. *Declare your decision* and *accept responsibility* that while you may take advice from professionals, family, and other patients, you will *only do what is right for you*.
- Put the statement in writing either in this book, in a journal, on a poster, or as your screen saver to remind yourself.
- Look at your lifestyle with honesty, humility, and with determination decide what *is* working and what *is not* working for you. Decide that you WILL change those things that are not working. You do not need to know how you will do that today but set the intention.
- Give some thought as to what it means for you to be open to change and accept that there are limiting beliefs you will need to overcome that will try to hold you back. Knowledge leads to power and confidence, so go on a personal mission of self-development to learn whatever you feel unsure of and gain the inner wisdom you need to responsibly take care of yourself.
- Believe this healing journey is possible and that YOU CAN make a difference in your own health by holding yourself accountable. The following principles will help with that accountability.
- See and begin to love the real you and decide today to support the wins, losses, and challenges that occur during this process. Practice looking at yourself in the mirror and say “hi.” Follow the “hi!” with a “good job.” “I love you.” “be happy!,” “we got this,” “we can do better.” or any other affirmation you feel supports you. This is about you and living your best life. Talk to your body and your body will talk to you, telling you what it does or does not need. Your symptoms are its direct communication.
- Find a quote that supports your courage, your decision, and your desire to heal.
- Work through the following principles of this book with determination. These are your tools to get you away from the pain of where you are now - to a place of helping your body to heal itself.

Take back your life and your body. The truth is that no matter where you are today, it is never too late to make the decision, take responsibility, and create new healing habits.

When I made the commitment to help myself, I trusted in myself and believed in myself first and foremost. I was no more special than you and had little confidence in the beginning, but I did have a will to succeed. I was not satisfied with just managing the symptoms, I wanted lasting relief and I wanted my health back. I worked hard at NOT being a victim of my circumstances; changed my identity to one of a healthy, vibrant person; and moved forward to define a life I wanted. If I can do it, you can too. Make that binding contract with yourself.

PRINCIPLE 2

YOUR REASON WHY

He who has a why to live can bear almost any how.

—Friedrich Nietzsche

*I did not want to live in a diseased body. I didn't feel good, had little to no extra energy to spare, and I did not want to live that way. I did not want to take nasty medical tests or medications that gave me worse side effects than the symptoms. I did not want to feel the constant pain. I did not want the uncertainty of what tomorrow would bring. One afternoon, I was complaining, hating, and overall lashing out in a rampage . . . something I tended to do too often. "D*mn the disease, d*mn the doctors, the schedules, the pain, the frustration. I am finished with it all!" I lamented.*

When I calmed down, my little five-year-old daughter innocently asked me if I wanted or needed anything. It was a breaking point. I was complaining about a life where my focus was on what I did not want. I realized in that moment it could instead be about what I did want.

*I had to decide what I wanted. I needed a purpose, a reason to put in the effort, and when I gave it some thought, I found I did have a game-changing reason to want to be healthy. This reason—my WHY—became my driving force to do what it took to heal my body, have energy and vitality, and live what I defined as my **new normal** life from that day forward.*

In my case, I wanted the ability to raise my children as normally as possible. I wanted no restrictions to participate because I was too weak; I wanted to interact, be a part of their lives, and do it without feeling ill. I wanted to feel good; to manage my symptoms better and to know I was in control of my body. I made this my purpose and my why. I never looked back.

We all have hopes, dreams, and bucket lists—things we want to do with our lives—and this comes with a picture in our head of what our days will look like. When suddenly diagnosed with a disease that may forever change that picture, the shock and sadness invoked can completely derail a person. You may suddenly feel like you no longer have the option to have dreams, and that you will no longer be able to make decisions about your life.

The emotional turmoil is very much a grieving process, and justifiably so. You have been thrown off your path and now find yourself on a very different road, left wondering what life can hold for you now. The life you had pictured or have been working for suddenly grinds to a halt, being replaced with endless doctor and hospital visits, isolation, pain, and anger. It is an emotionally charged situation, and how you handle it can make all the difference.

Many of those diagnosed with an illness are just fine where they are at. They have accepted their disease, declining health, and limitations. They may only feel comfortable following what the doctor prescribes. But if you have found this book, I am betting that you want a little more control of your situation and are someone who wants a different outcome and path than most. After making the decision to help your body to heal, the very next thought to address is: *what do I want and why do I want it?*

DECIDING WHAT AND WHY

Being derailed by a diagnosis is a shock. It is also a blessing and can be used as a reset to what was not working in your lifestyle. Use this as a defining moment to truly decide what it is you want. Our society raises children to hide their wants and creativity and ‘do what is expected.’ You may be living with programming from your childhood, enforcing limiting beliefs such as ‘you can’t be this,’ or ‘will never be that’ or ‘others know best.’ I was a product of that mindset. I was programmed to follow what was considered ‘normal,’ do as expected, and believed that I was not allowed to think outside the box. For you, this may look like anything from not enjoying the job you have found yourself in, to eating fast foods that are the modern social norm, to not allowing yourself to think outside the conventional medicine box. There are enormous amounts of restrictions and expectations that put burdens on our lives that many are unaware of.

I believe one of the leading causes of disease is not being your authentic self or true to what you want and are instead living someone else’s idea of what your life should look like. When my daughter asked what I wanted, I found that I did not have a good answer, or even a starting point, to determine what I wanted, who I was, or why I wanted it. I was only focusing on what I did not want . . .—and I realized that was the mistake.

You need to know where you are to get to where you want to be!

And you need to know why you want to be there!

It is important to identify not only your desires but your reason why. Your intentional decision to put in the effort to help your body heal itself is a good start, but knowing your why will hold you accountable. Just like mine, your reason WHY will become the driving force to implement and stick to the improved lifestyle habits over the next several weeks, months, and years. It will become the thing that reminds you not to eat donuts just because everyone else is, the reason you are taking walks at lunchtime, and the reason you are putting the effort in each and every day.

Your enthusiasm for life is hidden in what you want and the reason why. Many of us go through life on autopilot, doing what is needed or expected of us in school, jobs, social norms, and caretaking of family. But is that the *real You*? It is important to reconnect with *the you* that wants to come out—*the you* that is defined by your values and ideals.

WHO YOU ARE AT YOUR CORE

The place to start when determining the real you is to know your core values. These are the things you believe in above all else. No matter how out of control life becomes, you can fall back on these values. When our

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enthusiasm wanes or our 'why' gets smothered, typically you are doing something that doesn't align with who you are. Knowing your core values helps you to know when and why situations are affecting your health. It is worth the time to stop and identify your core values and where they are not being expressed in your life.

Some examples of core values:

- Authenticity
- Adventure
- Curiosity
- Altruism
- Equality
- Kindness / Compassion
- Creativity
- Nurturing
- Integrity
- Commitment
- Respect
- Courage
- Ambition
- Honesty

Core values are like superpowers, and we all have this superpower within us. An amazing thing will happen once you make the unequivocal decision to live within your core values. You may notice your life unfolding in almost a magical way. Rather than feeling you are swimming against the tide, synchronistic events and coincidences begin to increase, and things go smoother. Suddenly you find the exact article or meditation you need show up in your social media feed. Or maybe a class at the rec center you have been wanting to take now fits into your time schedule. Or the one food you have not been able to eat suddenly has an organic alternative you can use.

If you were to combine the concept of your WHY (the reason behind your actions) with the CORE VALUES you inherently possess, you would unlock a powerful insight: the discovery of your PURPOSE. Your 'why' provides the motivation that drives you, while your core values represent the principles that define who you are. When these two align, you gain clarity about what truly matters to you, leading to a sense of purpose that you can lean on. This is important, because living with purpose gives your life direction, helps you make healthy lifestyle choices, and will keep you on track.

**discover who you are and
why you do what you do, and
then do it on purpose.**

HEALING HABIT 2: WHY + CORE VALUES = PURPOSE

Emotions to develop: Inner strength, Courage

Emotions to be aware of: Discouragement, Anger

I have made thousands of choices regarding my own health over the years, and all were made with my WANTS, VALUES, and *WHY* in mind. You also will make thousands of choices throughout your life. Consider your why and core values with each mouthful of food, each decision to rest, each relationship you nourish or run from, each time you choose to *not* let a particular situation get to you. Your *purpose* will keep you on track. I promise that it will make a difference in a big way.

- Identify your core values and write them down to reference when needed. Incorporate what defines you in each area of your life. Defining who you are and what you believe in above all else will help you figure out what types of adjustments you must make to be true to yourself. Begin with answering some straightforward questions:
 - ❖ Who are you really?
 - ❖ What is important to you?
 - ❖ What drives you?
 - ❖ How do you spend your free time?
 - ❖ Examine your role models and what you admire about them.
 - ❖ Pay attention to what angers you and what makes you smile.
 - ❖ Where does your integrity lie?
- Identify what is important to you and what makes your life worth living. Make a bucket list as an ‘I want list.’ Start with a list of twenty-five things you want to *do*, then expand to twenty-five things you want to *have*, and then expand again to twenty-five things you want to *be*. Include things that may seem small, big, seemingly unrealistic, and obtainable. There are no limits here.
- Identifying your wants and reasons WHY. The following questions can help you get started on the habit of making, revising, and looking at your why and are an invaluable tool.
 - ❖ What are your hopes and dreams?
 - ❖ What do you love to do?
 - ❖ Identify the people that are most important to you.
 - ❖ What is the game-changer in the things you have identified on the previous lists? It needs to be something so important that your life would have no meaning without it.
 - ❖ What is the reason for the non-negotiable contract you are willing to make with yourself to make the lifestyle changes needed that will help your body to heal itself?
 - ❖ Why do you want a healthy body?
- Text your *why* to your friends and family, make a poster for the kitchen wall, a sticky note on the bathroom mirror, or make it your screen saver. Look at it every day. Going forward, whenever you feel that you cannot go on, the road is too tough, or the choice is too hard, you will want to remember this reason for working so hard on you:—your *why*. This is a critical step in taking control of your own health. This conviction will

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become your driving force to go on.

- Visualize the life you want by making a habit of taking a couple of minutes each day to picture that healthy, fun-loving person (you) enjoying life and living your dreams. It is a life that is not restricted by illness, diet, pain, or embarrassing symptoms, but one that is happy, full of vitality, with wonderful relationships and all the success you want. When you can see yourself living the life of your dreams, you begin to change your beliefs. You are telling the universe that “this is how I want to be,” and it sets the process in motion. You begin at that moment to heal your body. Make a vision board or write about it in detail.

If you define your purpose by developing your values and knowing your WHY, and dedicate your life to this endeavor, not only will your body respond with joy inside, but the universe will do all that is needed to support you. I am not suggesting that it will be all roses after this declaration, but it will certainly create a brighter path than the one you were on yesterday. Embrace the process and know all is as it should be.

PRINCIPLE 3

HARNESSING YOUR FAITH

The wound is the place where the light enters you.”

—Rumi

I can remember one day being frustrated by a doctor’s visit that did not go well. I was hurting, exhausted physically, and felt beaten down to a pulp, feeling I could no longer handle any of it. I had been reading a book by a Native medicine healer on universal energy and how prayer and drawing down a golden light into the diseased area could help one heal. I had nothing to lose so I recited the prayer, relaxed, and then pictured myself asking for and receiving a healing golden light to enter my body and surround the affected area. I was amazed that within minutes I felt the physical effect of heat and then calmness in my gut. As I lay there, I also felt an emotional peace I had not been feeling before.

As I continued the practice each day or so, I noticed my whole body becoming calmer, and when I tuned into my disease, began to see it healing. It was like I was suddenly connected to a universal conductor that allowed me to ask for and receive the healing. I continue—an expanded and deepened version of this practice to this day.

Struggles and suffering can lead to healing and transformation, not only in your physical body but in your spiritual and emotional body, as well. Taking responsibility, obtaining the knowledge you need, and then implementing habits to manage your symptoms can look and feel like a big leap off a cliff. It is a leap into the unknown of self-reliance and diligence. It is a leap of faith.

Embracing faith in spirit—whether grounded in a specific religion, a belief in universal energy, or simply in the strength of one’s higher self—can be an immensely powerful step on your healing journey. Taking responsibility for your own healing is often overwhelming, especially when it requires you to adopt new habits and let go of old patterns. But this leap of faith—trusting that the process will work, even when it’s difficult—is an undeniable act of self-empowerment.

FAITH IN YOUR BODY

Healing is rarely a straight and easy path. Putting faith in the process means learning to listen to the wisdom of your body, applying practices that require patience, and trusting natural rhythms. Faith is the cornerstone of the listening ability you will need to develop. It creates a connection and a relationship with your authentic self. It is this relationship that becomes a mystical power, giving you sovereignty and control over your own body and thoughts. A habit of tuning in to what your body is telling you—what is causing its dis-ease and how to fix it—is essential. It will create focus, determination, and sustainability in your actions and everyday choices. When you don’t stop to think and listen, your actions become quite haphazard—and lead you to the place of illness you are now.

Listening to your body takes some practice but can more easily be accomplished by listening with gratitude, love and an openness and willingness to help. Your body comes on board very quickly to tell you through intuitive thoughts or symptoms what is going on and how the food, emotion, or stress is affecting it. That distaste for sushi or that pain in your chest during an argument is usually not just coincidence.

Self-development also plays a vital role here. As we strengthen our ability to listen to our inner voice and develop habits that support well-being, we learn to trust ourselves, building the foundation for self-respect and inner peace. This personal trust complements our faith in a higher power, creating a holistic approach to healing that taps into both inner and outer sources of strength.

FINDING STRENGTH

Faith can function as your anchor on this journey, grounding you in the belief that you are not alone. When you cultivate trust in something beyond yourself—be it a higher power, the interconnected energy of the universe, or the resilience within—you are supported by a vast amount of strength. This higher strength can provide the courage needed to face and work through the obstacles on the path to creating your healing habits. Simply stated, this is not a journey to take alone.

The human condition of pain is a holy place in our bodies. It reminds us of our vulnerability and forces us into a space of humbleness. The pain of an illness, whether emotional or physical, can very often be the catalyst that brings us to our knees and opens us to a place of trust. Trust in our higher self can offer a sense of surrender, which can be a source of relief and freedom from the responsibility of caring for yourself. This surrender is different from the societal norm of feeling a victim of your illness. When you believe that a higher force guides you or that there is a doable path forward, it becomes easier to make peace with where you are in the process. In this way, faith and trust transform the journey of healing into a process of self-discovery and inner growth and forcing you into the present. This trust must come from belief in yourself.

Many decisions are made without thought, intention, or premise in our daily lives. Faith, trust, and belief are needed to stay in the present moment—the now—to make thoughtful and impactful decisions that will support the healing process. Being present in the moment becomes a grounding habit that allows time for you to stop and think before you act, allows you to be intentional with prayer or meditation, or supports you in that surrender and offers strength that will have far-reaching effects in this journey.

"Faith is the strength by which a shattered world shall emerge into the light."

Helen Keller

HEALING HABIT 3: TUNE IN AND THEN LISTEN

Emotions to develop: Trust, Patience, Humility

Emotions to be aware of: Distrust, Fear, Hopelessness

Powerful spirituality habits that can help you develop a deeper sense of connection, resilience, and inner peace will further your resolve and healing outcome. You want to create habits that force you to tune in and be present to make those good decisions. You may already have some good habits around your faith, and I encourage you to use and develop those fully. I would also suggest that you consider adding a new way to express your faith to expand and grow your own self-development.

- Meditation calms the mind, grounding you in the present and encourages self-awareness. Practices such as mindfulness, breath-focused meditation, or guided visualizations can help you connect with a sense of inner stillness and deepen your spiritual connection.
- Prayer is about asking for guidance and help. You can ask your body in prayer what it is trying to tell you by simply stating: “Help me. Help me understand what you are trying to tell me.” Listen quietly for the answer.
- Intention setting aligns your thoughts with your healing goals. Simply speak or write specific intentions around relief from pain, healing, or clarity. Regularly setting intentions can help focus your mind and open you to higher spiritual insights and your own inner guidance. Practice having faith that with these intentions forefront in your mind, your body will respond with answers.
- Deep breathing exercises help you center yourself and connect with your inner energy. Practicing this regularly not only reduces stress but also enhances awareness of your body and soul, grounding you in the present moment.
- Research or take some classes on spiritual traditions and healing practices. The list is endless, but Ayurveda, traditional Chinese medicine, Reiki, shamanism, earth and crystal healing, homeopathy, or sound healing are some to consider. Find what most resonates with you and tap into the interconnectedness these practices can provide.
- Connecting with nature has an innate ability to nourish the spirit and recalibrate the body. Whether it’s a walk in the woods, a visit to the beach, or simply watching a sunset, spending time in nature connects you to the natural world and fosters a sense of peace and oneness. It can restore your faith in yourself by showing you the wisdom of the world we live in.
- Engaging in creative activities—like drawing, dancing, or music—can be a form of spiritual expression. Creativity connects you to the essence of who you are, giving voice to feelings and insights that may not emerge through words alone.

Incorporating spiritual practices and faith into your life can build a strong foundation of personal awareness, resilience, courage, and inner peace. It will give you something to hold on to on those days when you are feeling discouraged and less than successful.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

As an advocate for holistic healing and self-empowerment in the face of chronic illness Rebecca Renck has lived by the motto that “you decide how sick you want to be”.

Diagnosed with acute Crohn’s Disease at 30 while raising four young children, she was determined not to let her condition define her life. Instead, she embraced a lifestyle centered on self-care, listening to her body, reducing toxins, and utilizing holistic remedies to manage her symptoms. Her resilience was further tested when at 55 she was faced with a breast cancer diagnosis, which she navigated using holistic treatments and minimal standard Western protocols.

An accounting manager by trade, Rebecca also has extensive experience as a program director and administrator for Boy Scout camp programs which allowed her to combine her organizational skills with a passion for being outdoors.

As an author and coach, she shares her journey and insights to inspire others to harness their body's innate ability to heal itself. A native of Colorado, she lives among nature on a serene mountain homestead, where she continues to explore and advocate for natural healing.

**I hope you have enjoyed this sample of *Healing Habits: How to Help Your Body Heal Itself from Chronic Illness*. You can get the complete book on Amazon...
Or on my website at www.rebeccarenck.com**

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