

BEATING MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Empowering Stories of Self-Healing and Thriving

AGOTA NAWROTH
& PAIGE NEWSOME

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To my loved ones,

This book reveals the transformative path of my MS journey and daily dedication required for a healthy life. I'm taking care of myself, so you don't have to.

To the multiple sclerosis community,

May our stories empower and inspire, fostering understanding, compassion, and progress. Together, let's navigate the challenges of this journey, knowing that we are never alone.

With love and deepest admiration,
Agota Nawroth

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to everyone who has contributed to the creation and completion of this book.

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I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the remarkable individuals who graciously shared their heartbreaking stories for this book. Your bravery in opening up about your journeys will undoubtedly resonate with others who find solace and strength in knowing they are not alone. I am honored to have had the opportunity to give voice to your stories and express my deepest appreciation for your invaluable contribution.

Lastly, I extend my gratitude to my followers, readers, and supporters. Your enthusiasm, feedback, and reviews inspire me to continue sharing my story and the knowledge I've acquired along the way with the world, raising awareness about diseases that can be prevented.

To all those mentioned above and the countless others who have contributed in various ways, your presence in my life has made this book a reality. Thank you for being a part of this remarkable journey.

With heartfelt appreciation,
Agota Nawroth

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Many individuals are searching for a diagnosis while struggling with various symptoms. For those of us already diagnosed, having answers can be a relief but also adds a lifelong burden. At times, this weight can feel overwhelming. I wish a book like this had been available when I was first diagnosed four years ago. It would have made a world of difference. Back then, I wouldn't have felt so alone and lost. I wouldn't have had to search through numerous books to connect the dots. My goal with this book is to provide you answers and give you practical guidance to regain control and steer your life back on track.

The stories in this book showcase the remarkable potential within us as human beings. We can heal our minds and bodies, making full recoveries from autoimmune diseases when we cultivate the right mindset and well-being practices. I haven't encountered anyone who thrives with a pessimistic outlook. Our minds are incredibly powerful. It's crucial to remember that the path to healing often begins there. While change can be a challenge, it's a necessary step for those seeking a healthier life.

So, who is this book for? It's not exclusively for people with MS. This book is filled with ideas to improve the lives of anyone, diagnosed or not, who is facing symptoms. Each chapter is a glimpse into someone's life, flourishing despite the diagnosis. My hope is that you'll discover a story or two that resonate with you. Please share this book, help us spread the message, and raise awareness about this complex condition. It doesn't have to lead to life in a wheelchair.

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Final Note

“Wellness is the complete integration of body, mind, and spirit – the realization that everything we do, think, feel, and believe has an effect on our state of well-being.”

– *Greg Anderson*

DISCLAIMER

The stories shared in this book provide personal perspectives and experiences, reflecting individual accounts. These stories should not be construed as professional medical advice or recommendations.

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Story by

ANGIE GENSLER

Diagnosed in 2004

Lives in New York, United States

Instagram: @Angie_msstrength

“19 years on my chart, ZERO in my heart”- Angie G. 23’

As a mom, wife, and business owner, I have always prided myself on juggling my busy life. I lived on coffee, diet soda, and adrenaline.

I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) in December 2004 on Christmas Eve. I had been suffering from blurred vision, pain, and numbness for a few months. Before my diagnosis, I had brain and spine magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) with contrast, did the typical neurological exams with evoked potential testing, and a neurological eye exam.

The doctors said: “Your brain lit up like a Christmas tree with lesions.” I believe five were located in my brain, but my spine was clear. “You have multiple sclerosis. You should rest and prepare for a wheelchair.” Followed by, “You need to begin a drug modifying therapy (DMT) immediately to prevent further progression.”

Life, as I knew it, PAUSED.

That Christmas, I forced myself to put on a smile. It was our first Christmas in our new home. The children were excited. We had a surprise trip to Disney World planned, and I powered through like I always do. I honestly don't remember much of the trip because I lost a lot of memories due to my head trauma from a car accident in 2017.

My sister has had MS five years longer than me. My mom was broken by the news when her second daughter received the same diagnosis. She felt like a failure. It was awful. My brothers were shocked. Witnessing my sister already living with MS (struggling with dosing/side effects of her many DMTs) scared the crap out of me. As I looked at my two young daughters, I knew medications were not going to be an option for me.

Looking back now, I believe I have had MS since my early twenties. I experienced severe symptoms, and I now see the correlation with MS. I was a partner in a landscape construction company with my brother for a few years. During the hot summer months, I would experience severe vertigo, blurred vision, and numbness of my legs. One day on a job, I became temporarily paralyzed with severe shooting pains in my legs and was hospitalized. I was misdiagnosed with Lyme disease. They gave me high doses of antibiotics and eventually sent me home. I remember missing a few weeks of work.

There were also several weeks where I spent days just bedridden from exhaustion. Not the typical exhaustion, but one where my body was so heavy that it felt impossible to lift. During these years, I did not stop. I would blame my issues on heat exhaustion and overworking. I lived on caffeine and stress. I pushed my body to the limit most days with twelve-hour workdays and labor-intensive work. It wasn't until I was in my thirties and a mom of two beautiful young daughters that the diagnosis came. Our daughters were four and six years old at the time.

When we returned from Disney, the diagnosis started to sink in. I looked my husband in the eyes and said, "You can divorce me—you didn't sign up for this." He married a strong, vibrant, full-of-life woman. One who could manage every physical and mental challenge that she faced, but this was so unknown. In my younger years, I watched an uncle deteriorate with progressive MS and eventually die. Upon my diagnosis, the doctors marked my future with fear and debilitation. I gave my husband an out, and he wouldn't have it. He said he would support me in whatever I needed to do, and that he would be at my side.

I had been seeing a holistic chiropractor for many years prior to my MS diagnosis for regular spinal adjustment and care. She always took the time to ask about my overall health and wellbeing. Along with my adjustment, she would question me on my water intake, my nutrition, sleep, and stress, and she would apply different essential oils to improve my function. She was always there to provide me with professional advice on certain issues when I needed it. During the first visit to her office following my MS diagnosis, I shared the news and burst into tears. She looked at me and said, “Ang, you need to drop the artificial sweeteners”, then printed out a list of anti-inflammatory foods I should eat, and what to avoid. She xeroxed a page from a book and handed it to me. The list of foods to AVOID was basically what I lived on daily.

This was the first positive advice from a doctor, post diagnosis. I quickly learned that the haphazard way I was living, without regard for my health, would no longer serve me well. I am forever thankful to Dr. Diane Zemba. I continue to see her monthly as part of my self-care regimen. She keeps my spine aligned, does atlas adjustments, and has helped me build my own essential oil collection to use daily. I still use the chlorophyll drops she recommended years ago to help with digestive health.

The first thirteen years, I quietly navigated my MS with alternative care and nutrition. This approach wasn’t discussed or accepted back then. I made a drastic change to my nutrition, removing artificial sweeteners and quick-to-go food. Within weeks, symptoms began to quell. Over the years, I’ve dabbled in different therapies, nutrition, supplements, and exercise, but nothing sustained as I lacked true knowledge, consistency, and support. I would have times of good function, and times of struggle.

Our home was where the neighborhood kids gathered for pool parties, bonfires, snowmageddon sleepovers, disco parties—you name it. I strived to be the ultimate cheer mom, stay-at-home mom, and track and field mom, who traveled back-to-back weekends with my children. My husband was carrying the weight of working and unable to accompany me most of the time. I prided myself on being the class mom and involved in the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). I was at every concert, event, party, and fundraiser. I needed to make every moment a memory for my daughters that their mom was present and capable, but then I would over-do it and become bedridden. I would drop my kids off at school and spend the day in bed. I prided myself on cooking dinner every night, packing healthy lunches, and having a perfect home, but my self-care would fall short, causing me to suffer with derailing issues. During those times, I suffered major setbacks, including mini optic neuritis

flares, bowel dysfunction, MS “hugs”, complete numbness of left leg/foot, months of “bugs crawling on my body”, and internal itching. I received different durations of steroid infusions, for different flares, which helped. I mainly leaned on my chiropractor, essential oils, acupuncturist, nutrition, and rest to get through.

The most profound MS relapse was my optic neuritis. It lasted months, and it was terrifying. My daughters were All Star Cheerleaders and competed nationally. I was that mom that drove to every competition, even the ones out of state. The optic neuritis attack came as we were in New Jersey. After a six-hour drive, my eyes were in pain and a touch blurry. I chalked it up to the long, stressful drive, and we settled into the hotel. One mom wrapped my head with toilet paper, creating a patch to calm the pain and stress. I laughed about it, and she helped my daughters with their hair and makeup. I took my place in the stands, alongside hundreds of other spectators, and waited for the competition to begin. As my daughter tumbled across the stage, I jumped up, screaming with pride, and my eyesight went black in my left eye. I was terrified, thinking I’d had a stroke. I couldn’t balance due to the loss of sight and was disoriented. We made it through the crowd, and I saw the paramedics. They said it wasn’t a stroke, but I should get to a hospital. Another mom drove my kids and me home in my car. Upon getting home, my husband drove me straight to the hospital where I spent ten days getting steroid infusions. With no improvement, I was devastated and broken, unable to fulfill my daily responsibilities with our children, home, and business. It was such an emotional blow. Thankfully, I had amazing friends that drove my kids to school, practice, and religion. They also helped me around the house and with cooking. I promised myself if I ever got my eyesight back, I would never miss a sunrise. God heard my prayers, and five months later, it returned to almost 20/20.

Through the years, “personal accountability” has been the motto to which I strive. I found when I had inconsistencies in my diet, symptoms flared. When stress arose, I’d have setbacks. When I lacked sleep, my cognitive function declined. If I didn’t exercise, I’d be more fatigued. As a busy mom, I found my excuses crept in, and my self-care got derailed, time and time again.

For many years, I kept my diagnosis secret as I felt shame and fear that people wouldn’t understand or feel sorry for me. There were a few people I did share my diagnosis with because they supported me during my times of struggle and helped with my family, but for the most part, it was very private.

Then, life took a major turn. As mentioned above, I was in a horrific car accident in February 2017. The head trauma I sustained mimicked multiple sclerosis. It was a year-long, painful recovery. My eyesight was affected as I was seeing orbs and suffering from crippling migraines. I had severe vertigo, memory loss, loss of coordination and balance, I had numbness of my left side, severe tingling of the hands, feet, and patches on my back. I was unable to drive because shadows cast on the road while the car moved would create strobe light visuals, making me throw up. I had to cover my eyes in moving vehicles. I had major panic attacks in cars and was crippled with fear. My life consisted of being driven to occupational therapy, physical therapy, neuropsychologist, neuro-ophthalmologist, chiropractor, acupuncturist, orthopedics, and neurologists. These endless appointments and therapies were part of my healing process and necessary in rebuilding my health. I will never forget a conversation I had with the acupuncturist.

I said, “My life is over—I will never be the same”.

She responded with, “You are right, you will never be the same. This can be your restart. Start where you are and move forward with each day.”

That hit my soul.

I spent weeks lying in a darkened room to quell my brain, with no television or computer usage. I missed weddings, funerals, celebrations, family time, and just everyday life. I gained forty pounds from depression due to inactivity.

Life was an unbearable PAUSE that I couldn't see past. I wanted my life to end... I didn't realize the Lexapro the doctors prescribed me after my accident began making me suicidal. One evening, I waved goodbye to my husband and children as they climbed in the truck and backed out the driveway, heading to dinner without me, once again. I sat on the porch of our beautiful home, sobbing uncontrollably, with bottles of pills in hand, watching the setting sun change the sky into brilliant colors. I was done. I faintly heard my cell phone ring, and in a brief moment of clarity, I answered. It was my mom. She immediately came over, and through that act, saved me. We called the doctor and stopped the medication. As spring began to show its renewal, I finally turned a page in my recovery.

March 2018 is the month my purpose and passion was ignited. After watching *Living Proof* by Mathew Embry, the story of his journey living with MS, I felt compelled to reach out to him and another gentleman in his movie, David Lyons. I quickly learned my inconsistencies, lack of knowledge, and lack of support kept me from my optimal health.

Support is KEY! I started to implement the Best Bet Diet and followed the MS Fitness Challenge free eight-week workout that was available at the time. I joined the Multiple Sclerosis Fitness Challenge (MSFC) Facebook support group.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/674667742732961>

I scrolled through inspiration from the members at that time who were talking about their strengths and achievements. It was a positive, inspiring page with support and information to live your best life with MS. I joined a monthly challenge and began to post daily. As I began to share my diagnosis, support started to build. After about a year, I began to pivot from receiving support to giving support, and I saw my purpose begin to grow. David Lyons saw something in me and suggested I get certified to become an MSFC Coach. I was humbled and honored.

In 2019, I decided to go back to school and become a certified personal trainer (CPT), an additional certification in Multiple Sclerosis Fitness. I wanted to learn how to properly train the brain/muscle connection, and with proper training, develop neuroplasticity. This certification was important to me as I wanted to build my greatest function, overcome my brain trauma, and stay ahead of MS. With these certifications, I began coaching for OptimalBody Training Program, optimalbodyfitness.com, and became a trainer for MSFC Virtual Training Camp, hosted during COVID. This is the fitness I'm doing these days. It is an online program—the culmination of David Lyons training methods. I implement these training methods at home with my RBS4 system and when I train at the gym. The training methods are focused on challenging your muscles and brain connection. It's purposeful movement versus throwing weights and jumping around sweating. I love to balance it out with yoga and meditation.

I have been on several podcasts, sharing my story and mission of hope. I have grown passionate about fitness and planned on opening my own gym, focused on women. I was all set to start construction when I was derailed with other health issues unrelated to MS. I was suffering from severe abdominal pains. Through testing, I was informed that I needed to immediately schedule an open abdominal hysterectomy to remove abnormalities and precancerous uterine cells that were aggressively growing. Another PAUSE.

The surgery was a success, and with removal, all fears of cancer were suppressed. However, two days after surgery, I went into a postoperative crisis. I began internally bleeding, which required four blood transfusions on my forty-ninth birthday to survive. Another PAUSE with a long,

grueling recovery ahead. I decided to make good with my down time and completed my Health Coach Certification.

Although my goal to open my gym has been delayed, I have moved toward a positive personal PAUSE. Pausing for me means taking time to truly focus on my health, fitness, and to connect with newly diagnosed MSers through social media, podcasts, and zoom calls. I'm very active with the MS Fitness Challenge support group and hope to continue to be that positive influence of change for others. Having this community is so powerful.

My last MRIs were two years ago, and they showed an improvement in my lesions. I saw my neurologist several months back, and she informed me she was leaving the traditional practice. When she said that I, Angie Gensler, had inspired her to incorporate holistic care along with traditional neurology, we literally hugged and cried! I'm waiting until she opens her new private practice, Integrative Neurology, Dr. Tal Mednick, MD, in summer 2023 to have my new evaluation and MRIs.

Over the past five years, my daily commitment to self-care has yielded me my greatest function in life. My daily routine includes sunrise walks to the beach for meditation and prayer, fitness/training, and supplements. The Best Bet Diet is the foundation of my nutrition, and I make sure to get seven-to-nine hours of sleep a night.

I have come up with an additional personal motto: "TODAY I CAN, SO I DO." I had it screened on shirts, hats, and recently got it tattooed on my arm as a reminder of my purpose. With all the pauses and setbacks through life, I don't ever want to waste a good day. On good days, I challenge my strength and look for ways to improve. On tough days, I rest, focusing on mindfulness and recovery. It's truly about finding balance between grit and grace within yourself.

In the early years, I was duped by dozens of supplement companies with promises of "healing", "improved brain function", "gut health", etc. I had a cabinet full of half-used bottles and expired promises. I found myself choking down fifty-to-sixty capsules a day at one point—it was awful.

Four years ago, I was introduced to Previnex, and I love their entire line of products, including their brain health, probiotic, omegas, joint health, and multivitamin. Their plant-based, vegan protein meal replacement shakes are a staple in my everyday health. I never realized how the quick-to-go whey protein shakes I drank daily were so inflammatory and kept me from my optimal health. I have had tremendous success with

this brand and will never use another. They have an amazing giveback program. I encourage you to look at it.

I have been micro dosing CON-CRĒT® Creatine HCL daily for four years and have given away countless bottles to other MSers around the country. My sister has also been micro dosing for two years. It is amazing how important creatine is for brain health, mood, lean muscle, and recovery. Creatine is being more and more understood as not just important for muscle health, but also as one of the most important supplements you can take for overall health. All our cells crave it, and our diets often don't give us enough. And very importantly, all creatines are not created equal. Many absorb poorly in the body and are a waste, while others contain ingredients that aren't healthy. I have had several conversations with the Founder and President of the company about the profound health benefits we MSers are experiencing with supplements like his. His company is currently doing research on creatine's key role in brain health, and I hope there will be in-depth research specifically on the positive impact of creatine on the MS brain. I encourage you to look at it.

Regarding my diet, I always have organic turkey meat on hand. I love to sauté it with veggies and spices and put it in lettuce wraps or on roasted spaghetti squash. I avoid dairy, gluten, and sugar. If it's grown, I enjoy it. If it's packaged and has a shelf life, I avoid it. Alcohol is very rare. I love chlorophyll water. It's a wonderful digestive aid. I encourage you to try.

During the pandemic, social media became an incredible platform to connect with MSers worldwide. I truly feel blessed to be a positive influence of change within our MS community, and beyond. I never want anyone to carry the burden of this diagnosis alone like I did back in 2004.

Finding support from people like Mathew Embry at *MSHope.com* and David Lyons at *MSFitnessChallenge.org* has been life changing. I admire their mission of educating others on the profound impact that optimal nutrition, proper fitness, and faith have in overcoming multiple sclerosis. Personal accountability is my motto, faith is my foundation, and sharing my passion and knowledge with those newly diagnosed is my mission.

My greatest advice to a newly diagnosed person is to PAUSE. PAUSE, and do a full assessment of your daily life up to your diagnosis. Do a full, honest review of your nutrition, stress levels, previous illnesses, sleep patterns, environment, etc. Then, commit yourself to a "detox" of your previous life. Start implementing anti-inflammatory nutrition, stress

reduction and sleep regulation, learn to properly train your body, and please don't expend all your energy trying to be that “ultimate” mom, father, spouse, business owner, or student; it will only derail you from building your life post-diagnosis. Pause and acknowledge your feelings, your shock, your fear, and then pivot towards people like me in the community—and in this book. Learn from our mistakes, borrow from our tools, be inspired by our resilience, and create your own path moving forward—a path of hope, discipline, resilience, and community. Don't focus on an end result but grow through the process, one day at a time.

We are truly stronger together.

GOD BLESS!
xo Angie Gensler

FINAL NOTE

"Before you heal someone, ask him if he is willing to give up the things that made him sick." -Hippocrates

As we reach the end of this book, I hope these stories have not only inspired you but also encouraged you to take a moment to reflect on your own life. The purpose of this book has been to shine a light on aspects that deserve recognition and change. It's not just about MS or autoimmune diseases; it's a call to awareness, an invitation to slow down and reevaluate our lives.

Our ancestors had wisdom we can learn from, and with today's technology and knowledge, we can create a healthier, more harmonious world, instead of heading down a destructive path. It's as simple as pausing to take a deep breath, enjoying the smell of flowers, and appreciating the beauty that surrounds us.

We hope you've found this book to be a valuable guide. In closing, remember that while healing isn't guaranteed, it's always within reach. The life you choose to lead is firmly in your hands. Join us on **www.BeatingMultipleSclerosis.com** to explore all the limitless possibilities together.