

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

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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

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Story by

BOB CAFARO

Diagnosed in 1999

Currently 64 years old

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Since my teen years, I have been in fairly good health, despite having allergies and asthma as a child. I discovered yoga while still in high school, and since then, I have exercised just about every day and lived on a relatively healthy diet. I have been a cellist with the Philadelphia Orchestra since 1985.

In December of 1998, I experienced symptoms of numbness and a limp in my right leg. Both my family doctor and my orthopedic surgeon surmised it was nothing but a pinched nerve—nothing to worry about. It cleared up on its own after a few weeks. But in February of 1999, I experienced optic neuritis in my left eye. My peripheral vision was affected as areas of sight were disappearing from view. I saw my first neurologist, and he ordered magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of my brain. Despite there being no brain lesions, he diagnosed me with multiple sclerosis (MS). He immediately sent me to an esteemed neuro-ophthalmologist at Wills Eye Hospital in Philadelphia, who started me on three days of 1,000 mg of intravenous methylprednisolone per day. The symptoms subsided for several months, but I suffered slight permanent

damage to my left optic nerve. The loss of some peripheral vision and brilliance of color has been with me ever since.

One can understand that I was in a state of denial about my diagnosis, so in April of 1999, I was able to get a second opinion from one of the most esteemed MS specialists in the country. Initially, he had some doubts about my diagnosis, so he sent me to a rheumatologist for extensive testing. All tests for rheumatoid disease came back negative, so the neurologist ordered an MRI of my spinal cord. Lo and behold, three small lesions showed up. He no longer had any doubt about a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis, and he started me on weekly intramuscular injections of Avonex. The side effects from this drug were so brutal that medication was necessary to counter the side effects.

The big self-administered intramuscular injection of Avonex was done before bedtime, and two ibuprofen tablets were taken along with it. The next day began with two more ibuprofen tablets, and for the remainder that day, I always had a case of the flu so badly that my hair hurt. The headaches were excruciating, along with the temporary inflammation of my optic nerves. I stopped taking it after four and a half years, and I was glad to get off the drug. To this day, I wonder how a drug that made me so sick could have possibly helped my body heal. During the next few months, I was on a mission to prove to myself that I had been misdiagnosed.

In July of 1999, I was doing thirty-mile bike rides in the mountains of upstate New York during an intense heat wave. This was a questionable activity for someone in perfect health, but for someone diagnosed with MS, it was downright idiotic. As a result of this strenuous activity, I began experiencing optic neuritis in my right eye, which was particularly scary because the peripheral vision and color loss in my left eye had never returned. I immediately headed home to South Jersey and began my second three-day treatment of 1,000 mg per day of intravenous methylprednisolone. This dose is the equivalent of 62.5 twenty mg prednisone tablets daily. This course of steroids stabilized things for about one week, then I came down with what I thought was a stomach virus. I began vomiting and was unable to keep down any food or water. This continued for the better part of one week. Against my own wishes, I was luckily taken to the hospital for severe dehydration. I remained in the hospital and on intravenous fluids for four days, until I was given anti-motion sickness medication which stabilized my situation. The neurologist at the hospital recommended I eat something, and I will never forget the first food they brought in after ten days of not eating. It was a greasy cheeseburger and french fries! Needless to say, I passed,

and a visitor brought me some organic tofu with brown rice and steamed vegetables.

After being discharged from the hospital, I saw my fifth neurologist, this time at the University of Pennsylvania Hospital. Up to this point, I had been neurologist-hopping, desperately seeking an elusive misdiagnosis. Now, there was no question about a definitive diagnosis of MS. I was barely able to move my hands as the ability to play the cello had been completely taken away. The optic neuritis in both eyes was so bad that I could not read and only saw silhouettes of people. As if that was not enough, I was incontinent and had no physical strength. My body felt like it was receiving a constant dose of electrical current, and my hearing was affected as I was constantly hearing helicopters chopping the air. I was extremely weak and lacking stamina, as walking half a block was as exhausting as running a marathon. I had been in good shape prior to all of this. But now, I was unable to even bench press a forty-five-pound Olympic weight bar with no weights attached.

My latest neurologist at the University of Pennsylvania saw just how dire my situation was, and he ordered a complete set of brain and spinal MRIs with the contrast gadolinium. The results of these MRIs were absolutely shocking. My brain had over fifty active lesions spread out at every level, and my spinal cord had one lesion that measured three and a half cm in length. It encompassed the entire width of the spinal cord. This explained the impaired use of my hands and loss of physical body strength. I did not see the 1999 MRI results until 2013 when I was writing my book. I went back to UPenn after the fourteen-year hiatus, and luckily, they still had them on record. In 1999, my neurologist only explained the severity of the lesions to me and discussed the radiologist's report, but actually seeing the frightening images for myself after so much time had passed was shocking. Here is a slideshow of some of those images: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ATjBXvaR7Vo>

My neurologist proceeded to put me on ten days of 1,000 mg of intravenous methylprednisolone per day. This was followed by six weeks of tapered oral prednisone, starting with 100 mg per day, gradually reducing to 10 mg per day. This may seem like a radical dose of steroids, but I have to give my neurologist credit for making the right call. To this day, I believe his decision was the right one which stopped the attack in its tracks.

At this point, I went back to my neuro-ophthalmologist at Wills Eye Hospital, who had been monitoring my lack of progress for the previous six months. He proceeded to give me a basic vision test, and I was unable

to see even the largest letters on the vision chart. He then administered a visual field test where I was given a thumb clicker to indicate each time a flash was seen in the periphery. During the test, I sat motionless without one thumb click as nothing could be seen in the periphery with either eye. He then halted the test, saying he would write me a note for permanent disability. That was the moment that changed everything for me. I suddenly went into survival mode, and I flatly refused to give up my life. There was a way out of this, and I was determined to find it and regain my life. From that moment, I gained a new mindset, and I would now devote all my time and energy to finding answers that medicine and neurology had overlooked.

Researching multiple sclerosis in 1999 with dial-up internet was a slow and arduous process. My vision was seriously impaired from the optic neuritis, and it was hard to read even with enlarged fonts on a twenty-one-inch computer screen. At that time, helpful books on the subject were few and far between. Dr. Terry Wahls would be diagnosed with MS one year later (in 2000), and her book *The Wahls Protocol* wasn't published until 2014. The one helpful book I found was *The MS Diet Book* by Dr. Roy Swank. I followed some of his dietary recommendations but with modifications.

With my computer screen set to a giant font, I embarked on extensive research to find out everything I could about MS. Until now, I had been passive, unquestionably following the advice of neurologists. The internet did prove to be invaluable, and the first helpful thing I found was *Water Cure* (www.thewatercure.com). It was written by an Iranian doctor who performed an uncontrolled study on Iranian prisoners, which was having them drink half their body weight in pounds multiplied by ounces of water daily. (Example: I weigh 160 pounds, and the recommended intake is 80 ounces daily.) After I started drinking so much water, I was not getting hit with the dreaded fourth MS attack, but I actually noticed my first signs of gradual improvement as my strength was slowly returning.

The next part of my research entailed rates of multiple sclerosis worldwide, which I was able to access on the internet, along with published clinical trials on drugs for the disease. It was interesting to see that the very poorest nations had rates of MS that were about one-third of wealthy industrialized nations. Japan caught my eye because of their extremely low rates of MS, despite high levels of pollution and severe overcrowding. I focused on their diet, which is very different from the Standard American Diet (SAD). The typical Japanese diet consists of far smaller quantities, much less processed food, and a far lower intake of

sugar, fat, and salt. While looking into this further, I stumbled upon the Okinawa Centenarian Study. This study entailed an extensive analysis of the diets of more than nine hundred people in Okinawa who were over the age of one hundred, and in perfect health. It is interesting to note that the women in the study had never been screened for breast, ovarian, or cervical cancers. Diseases that are commonplace in the West were almost unknown in this study. I saw this as my winning lottery ticket, and I adopted their lifestyle by telling the waiter, "I'll have what they're having!" It should be noted that they live on a low-calorie, organic, plant-based diet. If they do eat meat (chicken or fish), it's the size of a deck of cards and no more. On average, 67% of their diet is organic Japanese sweet potatoes, and most importantly, they stop eating when they are 80% full. This is quite different from our "all you can eat" lifestyle in America. I modeled my diet after the OCS about two months after my prognosis of permanent disability (about nine months after my first diagnosis). In retrospect, I wish I had made dietary changes sooner, but prior to this, I was busily immersed in a state of denial. I stopped consuming anything that did not belong in my body. This included alcohol, junk food, processed foods, GMO foods, and anything with preservatives or food coloring. I was so serious about this that I did not eat out in a restaurant for close to two years. Even when traveling, I prepared all of my own food to ensure I knew what I was eating.

The next step was devoted to regaining the full function of my body and hands. Determined to rebuild my body, I got serious about practicing yoga, and I followed *The Complete Book of Yoga* by Swami Vishundevenanda. My son was recruited to pitch in Little League Baseball, so to help him I found *Nolan Ryan's Pitcher's Bible*. I was somewhat familiar with Nolan Ryan, the famous fastballer who delayed the aging process of his body for twenty-five years. Having changed my diet to the Okinawa Centenarian Study diet, it was now time to change my exercise regimen to that of Nolan Ryan. With his book as a guide, I added weight training to my daily yoga regimen. After a short time, I was able to bench press a forty-five-pound Olympic bar, and as my strength returned, I incrementally added five pounds at a time.

After discovering I was still able to balance on two wheels of a bicycle, I began extensive cycling outdoors to regain my sense of balance, as well as stamina. Although it seemed like a painfully slow process, there was gradual improvement. After several months, even my vision was improving, along with the use of my hands. I had to relearn how to play the cello from ground zero. To push myself, I even started taking principal cello auditions at other major orchestras around the country. I

was practicing several hours a day and gradually regaining my lost ability to play the cello.

While rebuilding my body, I was singularly focused on the mission of getting my life back in its entirety. It was a fight for my survival, and I was not going to lose. Nando Parrado was one of my guides during this fight, as was Lance Armstrong (what we knew of him back in 1999). There were several other people who achieved impossible results, despite the overwhelming odds against them: Roger Bannister, who was the first person to run a sub-4-minute mile; Bobby Fischer, who beat the Soviet Union for the chess world championship; and Jascha Heifetz, who played the violin at an untouchable level for sixty years! To Fischer, chess was a game of life or death—the same way I viewed my health. Two more invaluable books I used as guides were: *A Practical Approach to Strength Training* by Matt Brzycki; *My 60 Memorable Games* by Bobby Fischer.

After the better part of one year on Avonex, I happened to read the package insert, detailing the clinical trial results of the drug. After two years, the success rates of the drug group and the placebo group were nearly identical. This shocking discovery spurred me to research the placebo effect and learn it as a skill. I was given a copy of *You the Healer: The World Famous Silva Method on How to Heal Yourself and Others* by Jose Silva and Robert B. Stone. This book was incredibly helpful as it pointed me in the right direction to train my brain to make physical changes to my body. I designed my own meditation method, specifically tailored to beating MS. It was a fairly simple approach. I started this practice by sitting quietly for five-minute increments while repeating healing commands over and over daily.

Examples of the healing commands are:

My optic nerves are regenerating.

My brain is finding new pathways to the muscles in my hands.

The use of my hands is returning completely.

MS is going into remission and leaving my body.

These five-minute sessions gradually increased to two thirty-minute sessions each day. The cells of the body are constantly dying and being replaced with new and healthy cells; in seven years, all cells in the human body are replaced with new ones (the bones being the slowest to regenerate). My theory was that by training my brain, I would have a say in how those cells are replaced by healthy cells. It took about three and a half years to rebuild my body to the point where it was prior to multiple sclerosis. Not only had I succeeded, but at the age of forty-three, I was in

better physical condition than I was at the age of twenty. It should be mentioned that during this extended rebuilding period, I did not go to a doctor for eleven years. Even though I was strong and in excellent shape, a bit of denial existed. I was still telling people I had been misdiagnosed.

Things changed in 2013 when I met Nando Parrado, the remarkable individual who survived the 1972 winter plane crash high in the Andes mountains of South America for seventy-two days. Nando should have never survived the ordeal and most people would have perished. When the plane crashed, he was thrown from row-nine into the bulkhead, and his skull was fractured in four places. Thinking he was dead, the survivors placed his body in the cold with those who had perished. Three days later, Nando awoke from his coma. Seventy-two days after the crash, he showed up in the foothills of the mountains to find help. This man had never seen snow, he had no survival training, no equipment, and no food. He traveled 37.5 miles on foot in one of the most difficult mountain ranges in the world during winter. Nando proved to be an inspirational guide when I was faced with the end of my life. I highly recommend reading two books about Nando's profoundly inspiring story: *Alive: The Story of the Andes Survivors* by Piers Paul Read, and *Miracle in the Andes* by Nando Parrado and Vince Rause.

After meeting him, I went back to my neurologist at the University of Pennsylvania after an eleven-year hiatus. Once again, he ordered a complete set of MRIs of my brain and spinal cord. Miraculously, there were no lesions to be seen. Aside from some permanent nerve damage, there were no traces of the disease. Here is a slide show of those images fourteen years later: <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/eSIIiuUAkX0>

After self-publishing my book in 2015, *When the Music Stopped: My Battle and Victory against MS*, I was invited to present at a book signing. The featured speaker at this event was the esteemed neuro-ophthalmologist, Dr. Robert Sergott, the Director of Neuro-Ophthalmology at Wills Eye Hospital in Philadelphia. Dr. Sergott is the one who gave me the prognosis of permanent disability. At his speech, he said he had never seen anyone come back from such an advanced case of MS. His speech was fascinating because he spoke of how I had changed my immune system.

Firstly, Dr. Sergott mentioned how switching to an organic, plant-based diet changed the microbiome in my gut. The more I thought about it, the more it made sense. The Standard American Diet (SAD) contains foods and chemicals that are destructive to the microbiome. Consider how alcohol reacts with the microbiome. Within the human gastrointestinal

microbiota, exists a complex ecosystem of approximately 300 to 500 bacterial species, comprising nearly two million genes (the microbiome).

Secondly, he addressed my extensive outdoor cycling. I cycled everywhere possible with the sole purpose of rebuilding my body and stamina. When one is cycling, the brain and body are multitasking. The cardiovascular system and muscles are getting a great workout, while the reflexes are hard at work, avoiding everything from potholes to inattentive drivers. Dr. Sergott looked one step further and said I was getting high levels of vitamin D from the sun. He continued by discussing the link between low levels of vitamin D and high levels of MS. He said this was the second way I had changed my immune system. After the book signing, I reflected on what he said. I began to realize there were two other ways I'd changed my immune system.

The third way has to do with exposing my body to cold temperatures. Heat is widely considered an enemy to those with multiple sclerosis as it can trigger an attack. My three previous MS attacks grew in intensity, and I was deathly afraid of a fourth one. As a precaution, I began taking cold showers everyday—even during the winter. I also cycled outdoors in cold weather with minimal protective clothing. My theory was I could still exercise my cardiovascular system without overheating my body. At the time I was unaware, but this was one more way I changed my immune system. The human body was designed to adapt to different climates and temperatures, yet our modern lifestyle has everything at one comfortable temperature. I believe our current state of complacency puts our immune systems to sleep. I am convinced that exposure to cold works to reawaken it.

The fourth way I changed my immune system was by intermittent fasting. When one eats food, the body produces insulin, which changes the glucose to energy, so the body can use it for fuel. What is not used is stored in the fat cells to be used later. The human body was designed to acclimate to different temperatures, but it was also designed to go without food for days at a time. This is where the stored energy is utilized. The problem with today's lifestyle of abundance and comfort is we no longer eat when we are hungry, but we eat because it is time to eat. Not only do we eat because of a schedule, but we consume more calories than our bodies are able to use. When this happens, free radicals (or unstable molecules) are released into the body. In addition, over-consumption of calories combined with the Standard American Diet, leads to high levels of fat, salt, and sugar, creating a seedbed for chronic illness.

When I discovered the Water Cure and noticed my first signs of improvement, I began drinking two quarts of water every morning before doing anything else. As a result, there was no room in my stomach for food. I was unknowingly intermittently fasting for about sixteen hours each day. When the body reaches sixteen hours without food, ketosis is achieved. Ketosis is a metabolic state that occurs when the body burns fat for energy instead of glucose. The keto diet has many benefits. These include potential weight loss, increased energy, and aiding in treating chronic illness. Ketosis also gives the cells of the body an opportunity to heal and rebuild.

The only supplement (or medication) I take is 5,000 I.U. of vitamin D3 daily, which I have been taking for the past three years. I do so because my wife Teresa is a clinical researcher, and she previously worked for Novo Nordisk (the stock you should have bought!) After her position was outsourced to India, she took a position with the Chung Institute of Integrative Medicine. Teresa ran an extensive and detailed vitamin D3 study for Cooper Hospital workers in South Jersey as protection against COVID-19 and other respiratory infections. The study showed a 75% rate of protection against hospitalization for the virus. I piggybacked the study because of what Dr. Robert Sergott once said about low levels of vitamin D and high levels of MS. I got COVID-19 in January of 2022, but I was completely recovered within three and a half days.

Even though I have been completely asymptomatic for twenty-four years, I still live a disciplined lifestyle. My daily routine begins with at least one liter of filtered water. Our house is equipped with a three-stage Granular Activated Charcoal whole house water filter, plus a five-stage Reverse Osmosis filter in the kitchen. While drinking my first liter of water, I begin my daily exercise regimen which can be viewed on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/ITofLP9MN0A>

My idea of eating out is usually sushi. I'm okay with this because Japan has such low rates of MS. I normally eat organic foods, but only after fasting for sixteen hours each day. My recipes are easy: if you have to read a label of ingredients, move on to something where you don't. Organic Japanese Sweet potatoes are one of the best superfoods, the easiest to make, and they comprise about half of my diet. I get them from my local organic farmer. He custom plants several hundred pounds for me every year. I bake them at 350 degrees until they soften, and after cooling, they are vacuum-sealed and frozen for the winter. Keep in mind they averaged 67% of the diet in the Okinawa Centenarian Study.

My typical diet consists of organic raw nuts and seeds, fresh fruits, and vegetables. Instead of pasta (which I love), I choose zucchini spirals. They are much healthier. I prefer quinoa instead of grains because it is a seed, and it has protein.

My wife Teresa makes a killer quinoa salad. It is one of my favorites:

Quinoa Salad

1 green squash - finely chopped
1 red pepper - finely chopped
4 scallions - chopped
1-2 carrots - I use food processor
1-2 stalks celery - finely chopped
3/4 cup parsley - chopped
(all veggies organic)
3/4 cup organic raisins - depends on how sweet you want it.
3/4 cup organic pine nuts (toasted on stove top)
3/4 cup organic balsamic vinegar
3/4 organic olive oil
2-3 cups organic quinoa - 1 part quinoa to 1.25 parts water. Any more water makes it too mushy. Allow it to cool.

Chop all ingredients. Toast pine nuts on the stove (in a frying pan is fine —no oil needed) until they are a nice golden brown (or darker) color. Constantly stir or wrist-flip the pine nuts while toasting. Mix all ingredients with the quinoa except for the balsamic vinegar, olive oil, pine nuts and raisins.

Whisk the olive oil and vinegar together, so it is homogeneous. You may need to adjust amounts to your liking. Drizzle over mix and stir immediately to evenly cover ingredients.
Stir in raisins and pine nuts.

All of the above ingredients are estimates. I eyeball the quantities. I used to use the food processor for most ingredients but found it was too mushy. Hand-chopped results produce a crispy crunch of flavor.

Lemon Dressing

1 ½ teaspoons white wine vinegar
2 tablespoons lemon juice
5 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
½ tsp finely grated zest
1 garlic clove
salt/pepper

Mix all but garlic. Smash garlic, and place in mix for about ten minutes. Remove garlic.

You can make this with or without garlic, or you can replace the garlic with finely chopped shallots. Sometimes, if the dressing is too tart, I tone it down with a little agave syrup to taste.

I haven't actively connected with the multiple sclerosis community other than with individuals who have reached out to me, along with the people I've gotten to know from presenting twice at the Wahls Protocol Seminar in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. I must admit to having shied away from organizations that are funded by the pharmaceutical industry.

I have been totally asymptomatic since 1999, and yes, it is tempting to go back to an unhealthy diet. Vietnam veterans have a saying: "When I die, I'm going to Heaven, because I've already been to Hell." I've never served our country, but in some ways, I feel I've been to Hell, and I'm not going back. Out of fear, I continue a diet completely void of meat, chicken, junk food, processed food, alcohol, and anything else that does not belong in the body. I still practice yoga every morning, and lift weights with Nolan Ryan as my personal trainer! There is no one-size-fits-all answer to health issues. But one thing is for certain, a healthy lifestyle will benefit everyone, regardless of their physical state. We live in a society where many people blindly accept a toxic lifestyle. Canceling one's membership to this toxic lifestyle is a move that represents the holy grail of good health.

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.