

# 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.

First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt thanks to Paige Newsome. Without you, this book wouldn't exist. Your belief in this project, constant motivation, and endless hours of work have been a driving force. You shaped this book in ways I couldn't have imagined.

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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# 20

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**Story by**

**SAM PANKO**

Diagnosed in 2015

Currently 28 years old

Lives in Dauphin, Manitoba, Canada

Instagram: @prairie\_momma\_essentials

My story is dedicated to Shelley Hood. Thank you for being my first introduction to living a life with multiple sclerosis (MS) drug-free. Even though I didn't know it at the time, you opened my world to the possibility of not needing medication, and I'm forever grateful. You are missed and loved always.

Imagine: you're eighteen, fresh out of high school and ready to take on the world. You have been dreaming about becoming a teacher since you were in kindergarten and can't wait to get started on your education degree. One day, you wake up, and something just feels off. You can't place your finger on it, but something is wrong, and you know you must go home. So, you pack up and move (which is an entire province away) after being there for only two weeks. The first week back, you wake up with minimal hearing, no taste, and messed-up vision. That was my reality back in September of 2013.

Hi! My name is Sam Panko. I am twenty-eight, a mom of two, and I live in Dauphin, Manitoba, Canada.

It was August 2013; I was preparing to move to a school located in a different province and live on my own for the first time. My summer had been rough between accidentally becoming pregnant, losing twins at thirteen weeks when I was in a car accident, and finding out that a dear friend from high school had lost his life in a car accident that same summer. The grief from suddenly losing a friend seemed unbearable, especially as I was moving away. I felt the best way to honor him was to chase my dreams and live my life to the fullest in his memory, so I planned to do just that. Because the stress and trauma I was going through felt so heavy, I was looking forward to escaping from my hometown and “starting fresh” in a new city on my own, where I didn’t have reminders of these events everywhere I turned. I avoided dealing with these traumas and believed that if I didn’t think about them, they would go away.

I had just moved into residence at the University of Regina, where I was going to start my education degree and was so excited. I was finally out on my own and couldn’t wait to see what life had to offer. I was at school for less than two weeks when something just started to feel off. It’s so hard to explain because I didn’t feel sick and I wasn’t experiencing any “symptoms”, I just knew something wasn’t right; I could feel it in the depths of my soul. I called my parents, terrified that they wouldn’t understand and tell me to tough it out but thank God they didn’t. They listened to me and started planning to come pick me up—no fighting, no anger, nothing. They just completely trusted me, and I will forever be so grateful for that. Thankfully, I was within the time frame that I could still withdraw from school without losing all my money, so I repacked my stuff and went home. Now that I was heading home, it forced me to face the traumas I had experienced over the summer with the added feelings around “failing” and moving home from my dream school. I was trying to figure out what my next step was now that I had just abandoned school on a whim because I was feeling off.

I have a long history of participating in musicals with a local production group, and they had a show happening the week I moved home, so I decided to jump on their backstage crew to distract myself from everything that had happened.

It was late September and show week was ramping up. I was so excited to have something to distract me from all the trauma that I didn’t want to deal with. I woke up on the first day of the show, filled with excitement

and ready for a great week. I was surprised when my dad came in to wake me when I had set an alarm. I realized that my alarm was going off, but I just couldn't hear it. I tried to find my glasses, and when I put them on, I realized my eyes were struggling to focus. I thought maybe I was just tired, and it would fix itself if I showered. I was seeing three of everything—moving up and down, side to side, and in circles—all at the same time. I continued to get ready, not knowing what I should do next. When I sat down to eat breakfast, I also realized that I couldn't taste anything. It was like eating lard. Trying not to freak out, I decided to ignore it and keep it to myself. I knew if I told my parents, they wouldn't let me participate in the show, and I wasn't going to let that happen. So, I spent the week driving to and from shows and rehearsals, getting by as best I could. At the end of the week, after our final Sunday Matinee (October 20), I decided to ask my dad if he would take me to the Emergency Room (ER).

To say he was angry at me for not telling him what was going on is an understatement. When I think about it now, I could have very seriously hurt myself or someone else while driving with impaired vision and minimal hearing. I thank God that nothing happened. When we walked through those hospital doors, I had no idea the journey that awaited. They looked me over and told me it was probably stress from the traumatic couple of months I had been through and told me to go home and sleep it off.

I knew that something more was going on, so we decided to seek additional opinions in hopes something would make more sense. We went to our family optometrist who told me that my eyes were perfectly healthy. He said that because of the symptoms I was experiencing, he believed it was neurological. We also went to a physiotherapist because of the accident I was in. She wouldn't even touch me because she also agreed that it was neurological and didn't want to make anything worse. Since they didn't take me seriously the first time we went to the ER, we decided to try the walk-in next. We saw a doctor that performed tests on me and was shocked that someone hadn't caught this sooner. He sent off a requisition to the local neurologists. Dr. Tamayo was luckily able to squeeze me in on October 23rd. He didn't usually deal with anything outside of strokes, but the other neurologist was on holiday, so he decided to fit me in when he heard the urgency of my condition. After his assessment, he immediately consulted one of his textbooks. He had his hand on his face and explained to us that in all his years as a neurologist, he has only seen what was happening to me in textbooks—never in person. He explained that my eyes were moving separately from each other, and they were also vibrating.

To investigate further, he sent me for magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). The MRI came back before we had even returned to the office. I remember looking at the screen and seeing fifteen lesions and feeling sick to my stomach when, in reality, there were three. Because of my vision, it looked way worse. I didn't find this out until many years down the road. He told us that he suspected it was multiple sclerosis, and my stomach dropped. I remember my father, who I had never seen cry in my life, burst into tears. He told us he would give us a minute before he came back to talk about where we should go from there. My mom and I left the room and went to use the bathroom. I remember standing in the bathroom, looking at myself in the mirror and trying so hard to focus, but my vision was too bad. My first thoughts were, "I'm only eighteen. I thought MS was an old person's disease. How did I become so unlucky to develop an old person's disease?" I remember thinking about all the life that I had in front of me and how worried I was that my life was over.

We came back to the room, and Dr. Tamayo told us that he was going to admit me to the ER, so they could run some tests to confirm what he suspected. They sent me for another MRI with contrast this time, blood tests, computed tomography (CT) scans, and finally, a spinal tap. When they performed the spinal tap, it was done incorrectly and went straight through my spine instead of stopping in the middle to retrieve the spinal fluid. They accidentally drew blood, which contaminated the sample, making it unusable. As a result, they had to take more than necessary. They advised me that I would likely have some severe headaches afterward since they had taken everything they could for the tests, but it should only last twenty-four hours. I stayed the night in the ER and went home the next day after all the tests were completed. They told me that it would take a couple of weeks to get the results from the spinal tap.

Over the next five days, I came back daily for two hours to receive my steroid treatment at the outpatient unit. It took me almost three weeks to fully recover from the spinal tap. I was too weak to walk, so my dad had to carry me everywhere. I couldn't sit upright, that's how weak I was. I needed help with everything from bathing to eating to using the washroom.

Finally, I got the call with my results. When I picked up the phone, they told me that all the test results had come back normal. They also informed me that the only test result they didn't receive was the test that would clarify whether or not I had MS. It was lost in the mail (these tests had to be mailed a couple of provinces away to be analyzed). I was devastated, angry, and frustrated. I'd endured all that pain just for them to

lose it. I remember the doctor telling me that I could come in that weekend to redo the testing. Alternatively, I could wait until I had another relapse that met the criteria of a new symptom lasting for more than twenty-four hours—which could be years—to qualify for a diagnosis. I made it very clear that I was not going through that pain again, especially after they did it wrong the first time. The neurologist gave me the diagnosis of Clinically Isolated Syndrome (CIS), which is just a fancy way of saying they have no idea what is wrong and sent me on my way. I was also informed by another doctor that I would most likely be in a wheelchair by twenty-five, never be able to have kids, and probably wouldn't live much past thirty because of the severity of my lesions.

I spent the next two years just kind of floating by. I couldn't hold a job because of my symptoms, and I didn't have enough energy to go out and do things with friends. I was in pure survival mode. My parents split in March of 2015, something I didn't realize I took so hard until I look back now. At the same time, I was struggling to feel like an independent person because of how sick I was and how reliant I was on my parents for everything. I watched as all my friends were finishing school, finding partners, and traveling the world, while I was stuck at home because I needed help with the most basic tasks, like using the washroom. I was humiliated, ashamed, angry, heartbroken, and scared—I felt like my life was over. At the time, getting a diagnosis was my main focus; it was all I could think about. I wished for a relapse just so I could get the formal diagnosis. It was so important to me because I felt like I was isolated on an island. Without it, I didn't feel like I fit anywhere. I couldn't apply for any funding or help through the MS society, I couldn't attend MS camp, I couldn't even explore medication options. I believed that a diagnosis would give me the clarity I was searching for and was the only way for my struggles to feel valid and worthwhile.

I have been attending church for as long as I can remember. I was there every Sunday, followed all the “rules”, like no swearing, being kind to everyone, and always including others—especially those who were left behind. I did outreach and helped the needy. I felt like, for the most part, I was your typical “good Christian girl”. So, when I was dealing with the looming diagnosis of what I thought was a chronic, life-long illness that would be debilitating, I was angry. I felt like God had betrayed me, that I was being punished for something that I didn't deserve. I had done everything I thought I was supposed to do as a good Christian, and here I was being punished and having all my dreams taken away from me. I was filled with aspirations to get a good career, travel the world, have a big family, and live a very big, full life. I completely fell away from God

and Christianity. I stopped talking to my friends from church, stopped attending church and all the associated groups, and removed it from my life in every aspect. I believed that this was proof that God didn't exist. Why would he punish someone that was doing everything "right" when there were much worse people in the world who were going unpunished?

During this time of limbo and being distant from God, my self-esteem and self-worth was at an all-time low. I truly believed that I would never find someone who would want to be my husband. Why would any man want to marry a woman that he would have to look after and would be around for less than ten years, according to the doctors? I'd become numb and started looking for anything to make me feel something. I started a relationship that was not good for me. I knew in my heart that it was toxic, but I believed I didn't deserve better and if I left him, I would never find anyone else. I believed that staying in an abusive relationship was better than being alone. I fought hard to keep the relationship from falling apart. Eventually, he ended things, and I was devastated. My worst fear of spending what little life I had left alone had come true. In hindsight, I'm glad that my ex broke up with me because looking back, I probably never would have done it myself. I moved back in with my parents and spiraled even more. This was the same time that they split, so I was returning home to only one parent. My childhood cat, who I'd adopted when I was five as my "big girl present" for starting school, was very sick and passed away only a couple of months after I moved home. This was the biggest loss I had experienced up to that point and the most painful experience. She was the one I would turn to when I felt no person understood me. She was always there to comfort me when I was feeling down. I never had to worry about her judging me or not loving me. She was my best friend, especially since I'd pushed everyone away. Losing her felt like I lost a huge part of myself.

I felt so lost. I would attend groups at the MS society, but because I didn't have the MS diagnosis, I didn't feel like anyone understood me. The youngest person in the group was a couple decades older than me, so I felt very alone and isolated. It felt even more devastating because I saw all these older people living with MS just fine, and I was using a cane, couldn't drive, and was told I wouldn't live to see my thirtieth birthday. I felt like everyone was mocking me with their health and wrinkles. I was desperate to have gray hair, a wrinkly face, beautiful children and grandchildren, and celebrate wedding anniversaries that made it to the double digits. Everything seemed pointless when I had an expiration date. I was just waiting to die.

I had no reason to do anything because I believed I wouldn't be around long enough to enjoy the rewards. I felt lucky when asked to be the ambassador for the MS walk in my town in 2015. They wanted to focus on a story of someone that was in the "limbo" stage who hadn't received a diagnosis yet. They believed that it was an important side of the story to tell. It felt great to be able to share my struggles with the hope of helping someone else.

I felt that maybe I could make a difference with the short amount of time I had left. From my first relapse in 2013 up until June 2015, I relapsed on average every three months. Most relapses were vision-related, so they weren't classified as a new symptom and didn't make me eligible for a diagnosis. Every time I relapsed, I was put on steroids for five days and told to go home. During one of my many relapses in June 2015, my mom took me to an appointment. This relapse was more related to weakness in my legs, so I was hopeful that it might be the one to get me the diagnosis I was so desperate for. My neurologist wanted to see me for a follow-up to discuss the routine MRI I'd recently undergone. The office was in a city that was two-and-a-half hours from where I lived, making it an all-day trip. On the way there, my mom was trying to check in and help by asking questions. Most of them were related to my faith and the feelings I had around God. I told her how I felt betrayed by him and didn't believe that he was real anymore. If he was, he wasn't someone I wanted to know. She said something along the lines of, "We know there is sin in the world. God didn't create sin to punish us; sin was brought about when Eve betrayed God. But I believe even though God did not create sin, he uses it for good. Just like when a mother doesn't stop their child from climbing on something like a short box; she knows that the child will probably fall but will also learn a valuable lesson from the scraped knee. She wouldn't let her child climb to the top of the deck where they could be seriously hurt, but a small fall might be what the child needs to grow into a better version of themselves." I had never thought of it from that perspective before. Maybe God did have plans for me that I couldn't see yet. God loved me and was with me the whole time, even when I tried to push him away; He was there protecting and guiding me because of his undying love.

During my appointment, something happened that changed everything for me. My neurologist pulled up my MRI and said because this relapse involved different symptoms than the others, he could now confirm it was MS. I finally received the diagnosis I had been waiting on for two years! But something else miraculous happened. When he pulled up the scans, one of the lesions he'd been most worried about had vanished. He looked over the scan multiple times and couldn't figure out what had

happened. He said that it was odd, and he'd never seen one disappear like that. The lesion was nowhere to be found. He told me that it must have been a machine error, or I must have moved during the scan because lesions can't just disappear. He said that it would probably show up again in my next scans, but it never did.

At that moment, it clicked. God had healed one of my lesions even when I was the farthest away from Him that I had ever been. That's when I realized I had never been alone; I had a huge group of people I didn't even know that were praying and walking this journey with me. Even though they didn't physically know what it was like, they were still there for support. Most importantly—I had God. He never left my side, even when I tried to distance myself. He was there, guiding me the whole time. I realized that through all this pain and suffering, I was now able to help others who were in a similar situation. I walked out of that office with a new diagnosis, a plan to start medication, and a new lease on life. I was ready to take my struggles and help others, so they never had to feel as alone and lost as I did.

I found out about a camp that was held in Ontario for young people with MS, and I was thrilled that I would finally be able to attend. I was scared to be traveling so far away from my family when I'd been relying on them so heavily, but knowing I would be surrounded by others who were not only going through the same things as me but were also my age made it so exciting and worth the risk.

I had no idea how much camp would change my life. I went feeling lost, alone, and hopeless about my future, as if nobody understood me. I had very low expectations but figured it was better than sitting at home and feeling sorry for myself. I'd started on Copaxone shortly before I set off for camp, adding an extra layer of complexity to my journey. Not only was I traveling alone, but I also had to navigate the challenge of keeping the Copaxone at the proper temperature and finding a way to travel with needles.

My week at camp was nothing short of life-changing. I got to spend a week with people my age, who had been through similar situations (sometimes even worse), and yet, they were still living their lives and enjoying every moment. It was at camp that I realized the doctor who told me I had a life expectancy of thirty was completely wrong. MS does not necessarily mean you have a shortened lifespan. I left the camp with new, lifelong friends, like my dear friend Kadesha (you'll read her story in here, too!), a new way to look at life, many new coping skills, and so much more information about what MS was. I no longer had this



looming “death date” over my head. I was so much more positive about all the possibilities my future held, and for the first time in two years, I finally felt like I wasn’t walking this journey alone.

My experience with Copaxone was not great. I have always been DEATHLY terrified of needles. Ever since I was a child, I had to use numbing cream to be able to receive any shot at all. But I decided to try Copaxone first because, even though it was a daily injection, they said it was the least damaging to my body. Looking back now, I realize that even amid my intense fear for my life, I had the instinct to seek the least damaging route.

When it comes to disease-modifying therapies (DMTs), you are required to be on them for a minimum of four months before they will switch you to a new one. I was on Copaxone for less than three months when I went back to my neurologist and requested to change medications. I was getting bad bruising, terrible cellulite, and the injection sites were constantly sore even when I rotated sites properly. I decided to switch to Aubagio. It was a much-needed break from the needles, but it also meant that I needed to get routine blood work to monitor my liver levels. They also told me that I had the JVC marker, which means that I didn’t have as many options for medication because it could trigger a deadly brain infection.

I was still struggling with symptoms from my relapses and was looking for a way to manage them as naturally as I could. One of my friends, Jordyn, was hosting a class at her house for an essential oil company she’d started using called Young Living. I decided that I would go and listen to what she had to say. I’d tried every other avenue, and nothing was working, so I figured I had nothing to lose. When I first got my kit in the mail, I was very overwhelmed but excited to hopefully find some relief. I started using the oils that were suggested to me to relieve my muscle spasms, migraines, brain fog, weakness, and fatigue. I found some relief, but I wasn’t using them consistently enough to see noticeable changes.

My daily symptoms were extensive, but I had finally stopped relapsing every three months. I had no feeling in my hands to the point that I would cut myself without noticing, hypersensitivity in my thighs, almost all fabrics caused me pain, daily migraines, light sensitivity requiring me to always wear sunglasses, little to no appetite, constant vision issues, brain fog, memory issues, trouble forming thoughts and articulating them, difficulty finding words or engaging in conversations, sleeping a minimum of fifteen hours a day without feeling rested, extreme chronic

fatigue, and being in a constant state of sensory overload. Looking back, I realize that a lot of the “MS” symptoms I was experiencing were related to the medication—not caused by my lesions.

Fast forward to August of 2018, I went to a bible study at a friend’s place, and I met my husband there. We started dating in November 2018 and fell in love fast. In January 2019, he came with me to my neurology check-up at the MS clinic. This was our chance to ask questions about family planning and how this would affect us as a couple. Now, if you know my husband, you know he researches EVERYTHING. He’d put tons of time into researching MS from what it was, to how it’s treated, to what it means for him, and every way he could help to make me better. My neurologist told us that my clock was ticking; the longer we waited to have kids, the less likely I would be able to get pregnant and have a healthy baby. He told me that to get pregnant, I would have to go off Aubagio. To do that, I would need to either wait two years for my body to naturally detox, or I would have to do a fourteen-day detox by drinking powdered charcoal three times a day.

On the drive home, we talked about our options. That is when my husband said, “Well if we want to have kids, we should probably do it sooner than later, and we need to get married.” I asked him if that was his way of proposing to me, and he replied, “Yeah, I guess so.” We started planning our wedding for June 2019, so we could begin building our family before I started working again in September. I was in school for the third time, this time to be an Educational Assistant. I was scheduled to start my first position in September, and I wanted to have the charcoal detox done before then. So, that’s exactly what we did! We got married on June 22, 2019, and I found out I was pregnant with our daughter on October 8, 2019.

My husband had already been living a much healthier life than I was when we met. He only ate food with one-word names: apples, potatoes, steak, etc., that had no ingredient list. He’d cut seed oils out and added extra healthy fats, such as grass-fed butter, to his diet. He was adamant that changing my diet would make a big difference in the way I was feeling and would help with symptom management. He also brought up vaccinations, showing me the research that he’d found supporting the fact that vaccinations do more harm than good. I thought he was insane and fought back hard. I truly didn’t believe that changing my diet or abstaining from all vaccinations would make any difference. He told me that he would not allow our children to be vaccinated, and I almost left him three months into our marriage. I was confident that if our children weren’t up to date on their vaccination schedules, then their risk of

getting sick and dying from preventable diseases was uncomfortably high.

I truly believe that the charcoal detox not only drew out the Aubagio, but also helped to remove some of the toxic burden my body was experiencing. My pregnancy with my daughter was extremely difficult. I had to quit my first Educational Assistant position only two months in because I was so sick. The doctors wrote me a note recommending that I take a leave from work for the remainder of my pregnancy. They prescribed “light bed rest”, which meant refraining from any strenuous activities. During the first trimester, I experienced constant sickness. I would throw up multiple times every day. My appetite suffered as I felt too weak to get up, resulting in barely any eating. It was a miserable time for me. Thankfully, the morning sickness went away during the second trimester, but I didn’t receive much reprieve before the crippling anxiety set in. My father was traveling two hours one way to spend the days with me because I couldn’t be left alone. I couldn’t sleep, and I had anxiety attacks multiple times a day. On top of that, I was experiencing what I believed to be a relapse where my vision started to worsen. Thankfully, the third trimester was better. I experienced only the typical pregnancy symptoms like sore bones and being tired, but I swore that I would never get pregnant again. My birth experience was far from pleasant. I was told because I was “high risk”, I couldn’t have a midwife and had to give birth at the hospital.

At three o’clock in the morning on June 6, 2020, my water broke. They refused to let my mother into the birthing suite due to COVID restrictions and the limitations of allowing only one support person. I was devastated and didn’t know how I was supposed to do this without her. After the doctors induced me, the progress was slow. I was induced a second time because nothing was happening. While I was there, the government changed the restrictions from one support to two. My husband called my mom, and she came straight to the hospital. I have never been so relieved to see her. Once she was there, things started moving. After they induced me a third time, I finally began having contractions and dilating. The pain was so bad that I couldn’t move, I couldn’t talk, I couldn’t even open my eyes between contractions.

The doctors told me I could push for two more hours. If nothing happened, then they would need to do a cesarean (C-section). One of my biggest fears in life was getting surgery, especially a cesarean. I was going to do everything I could to make sure that didn’t happen. Suddenly, her heart rate dropped. She was stuck, and they had to prepare me for an emergency C-section. The room was swarming with

nurses and staff, preparing me for the surgery. I'd never been so terrified in my life. They took my husband to get prepped and whisked me away to the operating room, leaving my mom behind. At this point, I had been in labor for close to thirty-six hours. I was so tired that I couldn't keep my eyes open, even if I tried. I remember lying on the table while they told me they were going to start, asking if I could feel them touching me. I told them I could, but another doctor said they couldn't wait—they had to start cutting. I felt the first half of the surgery, but luckily, my daughter came out healthy. They took her away to the NICU because she wasn't breathing initially, and she was three weeks early. I was left on the table alone. I told my husband to follow her and make sure she was okay. They left me in recovery for over four hours. I begged them to bring Sophia to me, so I could meet her and feed her.

I finally got to meet her five hours after she was born, and suddenly, my life had new meaning. I had the most perfect little girl that relied on me being my best, healthiest self, so she could thrive. I was going to move heaven and earth to make sure she had the best mom possible. I now had a reason to be as healthy as I could, so I could live as long as possible to see her grow up. I could no longer say, "Well, if I don't live that long, then it's not a big deal. It won't impact anyone that much." The pain I felt when I thought about not being around to see her grow up was unbearable. I wanted to show her that no matter what life threw my way, I would fight as hard as I could to be my best self for her.

Something in me clicked after she was born. I finally understood where my husband came from when he talked about how important diet was. It was like the veil was lifted, and I was no longer blind to what was happening in the world. I finally understood how corrupt the systems were from the crap they put in our food to the forced vaccination schedule. By realizing the harmful ingredients in these shots, I became aware of the importance of detoxing our lives and making conscious efforts to improve our body's natural healing ability. This realization led me to question the necessity of vaccine schedules and to prioritize preventive measures to avoid further damage. After all, God made our bodies perfectly; God doesn't make mistakes. He made it so that we could naturally heal and gave us the tools on earth from the beginning to do this.

I reached out to my friend, Jordyn, who'd hosted the oil class back in 2015 to talk about how I could get started making healthier choices. I'd researched all the top companies that offered oils, and Young Living kept coming out on top. They were the only company that sold 100% pure products. I could visit the farms to see where and how my products were

made first-hand, so I knew the quality was amazing. Transparency like that is very hard to find. I discovered that despite being labeled as green and eco-friendly, many companies claiming to sell 100% clean products actually include synthetics, fragrance, and other chemicals known to be linked to health issues. It became clear to me that avoiding these substances was crucial if I wanted to regain my health. That's why I started with the cleaning line this time, and it was a game-changer. I noticed improvements immediately. I understood that I needed to reduce the stress and toxic burden on my body and drastically change my environment to address the root cause of my symptoms, whereas before I was just using natural remedies to chase symptoms as they came.

I also changed my diet; I went from eating mostly processed food to now eating all whole foods with the occasional treat. Additionally, I stopped using toxic household products from the grocery store that were full of endocrine disruptors and carcinogens. I created an environment where my body could begin to function optimally again. This was the beginning of shifting from survival mode and symptom management to thriving and root-cause healing. I believe that removing the toxins from my home was the key to no longer relying on medication. My specialists were trying hard to get me back on DMTs as soon as I was done breastfeeding. But just before Sophia's first birthday, I became pregnant with my son.

This pregnancy was such a breeze compared to my first, and I believe that it was because I had changed my diet drastically and removed all the toxic products that were making me sick. We decided that we weren't going to vaccinate our daughter, and I stopped receiving all vaccinations, including the flu shot, which was something I was so adamant about in the early years of my diagnosis. I believe that this made a huge difference not only for myself, but also for my children. I had no symptoms at all, and at points before I started showing, I forgot I was pregnant; it was so easy. I had the oils and other products to help me. I was able to handle any issue in this pregnancy strictly with oils.

Because of the traumatic birthing experience with my daughter, I wanted to investigate alternative methods for my son's birth. I was told by my OBGYN that he was going to schedule me for a C-section because my pregnancies were less than three years apart. He told me that I would also certainly rupture my incision, and there was a high chance that I would kill either myself, my son, or both of us if I tried to have a vaginal birth after cesarean (VBAC). He told me that a cesarean was also easier for him, so he wanted to go that route. When I heard him say this, it triggered something in me; I was determined to find an alternate option. I started looking into home birth and was amazed at what I learned. The

more I researched and talked to others that had VBACs, the more I realized what I had been told by the doctors was simply not true. What they were taught to believe was not based on science at all. I realized that my body was built to birth babies. I realized that the trauma I experienced in my daughter's birth was a direct result of the lack of education on my provider's part. All the things that contribute to a natural birth were not present at the hospital. Women are mammals and therefore, we need the same thing any other mammals needs to birth: a quiet space we feel safe in, only people we trust to be with us, darkness, and to be undisturbed. My experience at the hospital was the exact opposite. So, I decided to trust my body and have a home birth, alongside my birth attendant, who'd been present for hundreds of births, and my husband. I stopped attending prenatal appointments after my anatomy scan at twenty-one weeks because they tried pushing tests and immunizations that I did not want. They threatened to terminate my prenatal care if I didn't get what they were "suggesting", so I decided to stop going.

My water broke on January 23, 2022, which was a month early, but labor didn't start until noon on January 25th. I was able to lay in my bed and watch my favorite movie while labor started. Once things got a bit more intense, I moved to the tub and continued to do the hypnobirthing techniques I had practiced. When my birth attendant arrived, she set up the pool, and I finished my labor there. From the start of labor to when my son arrived was only five hours, and I was only in pain for the last fifteen minutes.

This birth was so transformational for me. It was the first time since 2013 that I trusted and worked with my body. I'd spent the last nine years feeling like my body was working against me and feeling so disconnected from it. I finally felt like my body and I were on the same team again; I wasn't as broken as I thought I was. This was huge because it showed me that just because a doctor says something doesn't mean it's true. It proved to me that I know my body best—no one else should be making any decisions regarding my health but me.

When I started taking my health decisions back into my own hands, I realized that we are all unique and experience our symptoms and triggers differently. The great thing about natural alternatives is they can be tailored to benefit us in the way we need and can be adjusted until we find something that works best. I found when I was looking at medications that they always came with a long list of side effects. To me, this defeats the purpose of taking the medication. Why would I take a pill to stop one issue if it was going to potentially cause fifteen others? I

didn't want to spend my life managing side effects. I knew there had to be a better way and that is why I turned to plant-based products that work with my body the way God intended.

After my experiences with the medical system, I committed to learning as much as I could about the changes I could make to reduce my reliance on it. I continue to monitor with annual MRIs, but I have stopped receiving the dye because of the impact it has on my health. To stay proactive, we are doing other things, such as eating a diet focused on whole and fresh foods and reducing our consumption of packaged foods with long ingredient lists. We get our eggs from a local farmer, and we have started buying our beef from my friend (a local farmer who grass-feeds his cows). We very rarely buy meat from the store anymore because we felt we couldn't trust what was in it. Of course, we still splurge occasionally, but nothing compared to the way I used to eat. We cook 98% of our meals at home, and we very rarely eat out. I make the majority of the kids' snacks from scratch which cuts back on the damaging ingredients found in packaged foods. By doing this, we can stay away from seed oils and artificial dyes as much as possible, especially red dyes and canola oil that fuel inflammation and disease in the body. We have noticed the biggest changes in the kids: they throw far less tantrums, they can communicate clearer, they sleep through the night, they have bigger appetites, and they can focus on tasks easier. I personally saw an increase in my energy, focus, quality of sleep, and mood control.

In my experience researching chronic illness, it is the result of two things: either too much of something toxic and/or not enough of something vital, like nutrients. Every illness can be attributed to either factor. By focusing on improving these, you will see big changes. You cannot heal in the same environment that made you sick. To shift your body back into balance, you need to clean up your environment. Your environment is classified as anything you breathe (chemical compounds in the air from cleaning products, pollution, mold, etc.), anything you consume (food, water, the news), and anything that touches your skin (soaps, lotions, makeup). It took me a long time to realize that our daily habits contribute to either disease or wellness. Once I decided to embark on a journey of healing and allowed my body to detox, I started seeing improvements in my health.

Do you know how many known toxins are allowed in our everyday products? These products interfere with our hormones, suppress our immune systems, interfere with our nervous systems, and negatively impact virtually all body functions. When our bodies are out of

balance and struggling to filter out these toxins, we experience things like difficulty sleeping, poor energy, mood fluctuations, fertility problems, weight gain, fatigue, muscle weakness and aches, decreased sex drive, depression, anxiety, and so much more. These symptoms are really like a warning sign from our body that we must make a change. Sadly, most of us are taught to take a pill for each individual symptom rather than addressing the root cause of the issue. More toxins mean more stress on our bodies, causing more severe symptoms. Most people stay stuck in this loop until they eventually get diagnosed with a chronic disease.

Fragrance is a term that companies use because it means they don't have to disclose what ingredients they include to make your products smell "nice". It's chalked up as a "company secret" when it's just a dumping ground for toxins. Did you know that there are over 3,000 chemicals that can hide behind that word? Most of them are known to be endocrine and immune disruptors, carcinogens, and much more. Fragrance is linked to asthma, eczema, cancer, neurological conditions, birth defects, migraines, irregular menstruation, worsening of menopause symptoms, and so much more. Common culprits that have fragrance include wall plug-ins, candles (yes, even soy-based), room sprays, fabric softeners, laundry detergent, dryer sheets, scented cleaners, sunscreen, lotion, soap, etc. These products are wreaking havoc on our bodies. When I ditched these for an all-in-one cleaner that smelled amazing and didn't carry any toxins, that's when I noticed a massive change in my symptoms; my relapses stopped.

The biggest lesson I learned during my switch to healthy living is that the products you use matter. Is it better to buy a cheaper, more convenient product that might save you a bit of money and time, or is your health worth investing in? After all, if we don't have our health, what do we have? It's the most important investment you can make not only for yourself but for your family and the generations ahead of you. The decisions you make have long-term effects, especially if you are a woman.

What made the biggest impact and shift in my health were the daily practices I implemented to start living a healthier life. Switching out over-the-counter drugs I used for symptom management to products that are clean and benefit my body instead of adding to toxic overload but also provide the same relief has been a game-changer. I started addressing the root cause of the symptoms I was experiencing. For example, I have always struggled with headaches and migraines. I used to take Advil, which took the pain away temporarily, but once it wore off,



I would be dealing with another headache. Once I changed my mind set and started looking into what could be causing the migraines, I realized that I was extremely deficient in minerals and electrolytes and usually dehydrated. Now, instead of popping a pill, I drink water with added electrolytes and minerals, I eat foods high in antioxidants, and consume a drink with added antioxidants daily. Since starting this routine, I went from having a headache/migraine daily to getting one every five months.

I now know what it truly means to be healthy! I have learned the true markers of health: high energy, restful sleep, pain-free periods, easy to maintain weight, clear skin, strong immune systems that can fight off illness quickly, balanced mood, consistent appetite, regular bowel movements, healthy pregnancies, and so much more. Regarding the essential oils that I use daily, it took a lot of trial and error to figure out what worked best. Once I found the best oil and supplement routine, it became my favorite part of the day. I used to spend my days in bed, sleeping constantly. If I was awake, I would eat food that was convenient and didn't need any energy to make, and I watched TV. I never did any housework because I was too weak to stand for longer than a couple minutes. Now, I get up with my kids every morning, take them for walks, do activities with them, cook them homemade meals, do most of the housework and errands, and truly enjoy the day with my beautiful kids.

Working on life changes helped me the most. Adding the essential oils just sped up the process. When I switched to healthy living, my eyes were opened to how many other people were also struggling, feeling lost, overwhelmed, and alone with no one to turn to for advice. After experiencing my transformation, I used the knowledge to help others figure out what their bodies needed to be able to live life to the fullest.

I avoid making generalized recommendations in terms of supplements and products because every person is very different. I believe that health should be individualized. When we take this approach, we see the best results. When I work with individuals, we dive into their personal history and thoroughly explore the areas they want to address, along with their desired outcomes. I have a questionnaire that we will fill out together. This helps me to create a specialized, individualized plan to help you meet your health goals. Then, I can work with you to figure out a routine that is tailored to exactly what your body needs; we can adjust accordingly to make sure it's a perfect fit. You can learn more about the changes I have made and the incredible products that changed my life on Instagram and Facebook at [@prairie\\_momma\\_essentials](#). If you are just wanting to browse products, you can check out the Young Living

website. Use my referral code, 3451893, when signing up, and you will receive a special welcome gift from me!

I am so lucky to have an entire community of like-minded individuals that I get to walk this journey of true health with. Feel free to reach out to me, and I will introduce you to this huge community with endless resources. We band together, cheer for each other, sit with you through your struggles, and help you to find a way out.

My advice for someone newly diagnosed is to advocate for yourself—don't let anyone tell you what is best for your body. You know what is best for you and your body, and if you feel that you don't, sit back and really listen to the signals your body is sending you because I promise it is trying to communicate with you. Don't feel like you need to know it all right away. You will find your flow and figure out what works for you as time goes on. Resting is more than okay. NEVER feel guilty for taking the time to rest. You are no good to anyone if you are burnt out, over stimulated, and at your breaking point. Resting is just as productive as anything else. And don't feel bad if you get things wrong. Failure is the most important part of learning. If something doesn't work, just pivot, and try something else.

MS has taught me more about myself than I ever thought it would. I have learned to listen to my body, treating it with respect and care. It has taught me that I am so much stronger than I give myself credit for. MS taught me how to prioritize my health and how necessary rest is. I used to feel extremely guilty if I wasn't always doing something. MS forced me to slow down and focus on listening to what my body needed and resting before I burnt out. Because of MS, I found my purpose in life. I struggled as a young person, figuring out what I had to give to the world and how I could help. I finally realized that my purpose is to help others realize the importance of getting back to the basics, like cooking our own food, relying on plants for healing, being part of a community, and teaching others how to listen to what their bodies are telling them.

## 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](http://www.BeatingMultipleSclerosis.com)** to explore all the limitless possibilities together.