

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 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

MARIA INDERMÜHLE

Diagnosed in 2012

Currently 45 years old

Lives in Switzerland (from Scotland)

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My body was in lockdown before lockdown ever happened. The diagnosis of multiple sclerosis (MS) helped me navigate COVID's lockdown because it all felt so strangely familiar. A few years earlier, I couldn't leave my home when my body went into "lockdown". During that period, I had no feeling from my chin down, and my husband was spoon-feeding me. However, this time was slightly different. The world might have gone into lockdown, but my body did not.

As people's mental health plummeted and anxiety heightened, I felt a deep, indescribable, inner peace wash over me, which I felt guilty for having when so many people were struggling to grasp this new reality that hit us all like a tornado. I chose to focus on hope—not fear.

In 2012, when I was given the diagnosis of MS, I asked the neurologists lots of questions: What causes MS, and why did I have it? Only to be met

with shrugged shoulders and a shaking of heads. So, I made it my mission to find out. And find out I did. Everything makes perfect sense to me now. Numerous factors led to my MS diagnosis, with some of these factors manifesting many years before any symptoms appeared.

I strongly believe that the story of our life is the story of our health. It was through understanding and making sense of my own life and the events that took place beforehand that I was able to do something positive about the diagnosis, changing the trajectory of the disease. I still live with MS, but MS doesn't run or ruin my life like it once did.

When I was told I had multiple sclerosis, which was described to me as a “progressive disease”, which meant “progressive decline”, I was sent away to rearrange my home to accommodate a wheelchair. Despite the negativity conveyed to me, I remained hopeful. It's sad to say that my hope was met by a very annoyed neurologist. I was mocked and laughed at for having such hope. I understand why he reacted like this because daily he was seeing such destructive and debilitating symptoms of MS destroying people's lives. In his mind, why would I be any different?

Over these past eleven years since my diagnosis, I have not stopped clinging to hope. Health starts with hope. Take away hope, and what do we have—a pretty sad existence.

Let me tell you a little about my life before MS.

I was a Retail Sales Manager back home in Inverness in the Highlands of Scotland, pouring all my time and energy into driving sales and smashing weekly targets, providing excellent customer service skills, and motivating a sales team. I was barely making enough money for myself to pay the rent for my flat, run a car, and eat. It was becoming overwhelming, and I was stressed. Then, I was invited to go to Switzerland for the weekend. Little did I know my life was about to change!

That weekend, I fell in love at first sight. This man, who is now my husband, opened the door and smiled, and I knew in that very instant that he was the man I would marry! During that weekend, in May 2010, the volcano erupted in Iceland, cancelling many flights all over the world, including mine from Geneva to Edinburgh. It allowed me to have more time in the country which would soon become “home”.

It was a whirlwind romance. Within six months, we were engaged. We were married four months later, saying our vows on April Fool's Day

(but in the afternoon—anything you do in the morning on April Fool’s Day can be classified as a joke).

Now, Switzerland is not known for being the cheapest of countries, and it was because of this that my husband suggested I get any dental treatment done before I leave the Highlands of Scotland. It made sense, so that’s what I did. One week before our big day, I had my appointment with the dentist which required me to have four fillings put in my mouth. These fillings were what’s known as “silver fillings”. What I now realize is that these fillings actually contain more mercury than silver. The World Health Organization (WHO) considers mercury to be one of the top ten most toxic substances to human health. Yet, that day when I innocently sat in the dentist’s chair, not only was I being exposed to one of the world’s most toxic substances, but I gave permission for it to be put in my mouth, not knowing what I know now. Certainly, my MS diagnosis wasn’t the result of a single factor but rather an accumulation of various factors, with mercury exposure being just one of them.

After the fillings were completed, I distinctly remember tasting metal in my mouth. It didn’t go away for about two weeks. It was so bad that I couldn’t even taste the food on our wedding day. I brought this up to the dentist who dismissed me, informing me that it was normal, and it would go away. This marked the beginning of medical professionals dismissing my health concerns when things felt off in my body.

Now that I am practicing functional medicine in my online clinic, I consider it crucial for me to understand a client’s timeline (the events that have taken place in their life before they fell sick). The questions that are the most beneficial in providing that “ah-ha” moment for me, as well as the client, are:

“When was the last time you felt well?”
“You have never felt well since when?”
“What was happening at that time?”

Had I been asked those questions, I would have replied: “I have not felt well since the day I went to the dentist and got four silver fillings put in my mouth.”

Immediately after getting married, we went to Switzerland. French was spoken in the part we were going to live in, so my husband enrolled me in an Intensive French Class. I was quite excited about embracing this new skill; however, nothing prepared me for how difficult I was going to find it to retain anything I was being taught. On top of struggling to remember all the new vocabulary, I was now experiencing what felt like

thousands of ants running up and down my spinal cord, and I could hardly breathe. It was as if someone was sitting on my chest.

I did what most people would and visited the doctor, but he promptly dismissed my symptoms. Without even taking my blood pressure, he suggested I take some antidepressants. According to him, I was too young to have anything seriously wrong with me; it was probably homesickness. I knew I wasn't depressed—far from it! I had just gotten married to the man I loved and was extremely happy. Despite feeling something was wrong in my body, he wouldn't listen, and it was frustrating not to be taken seriously.

As the summer progressed, so did my symptoms. My right leg became weak; I felt like it was dragging. And the vision in my right eye was going blurry. It felt like my body was shutting down on me at a rapid rate.

I began spending my days researching my symptoms on the computer. One day, I came across an article that made my symptoms sound very similar to what is known as multiple sclerosis. I returned to the same doctor who had dismissed me a few months earlier and asked him if he could refer me to see a neurologist because of my discovery. With some hesitation, he agreed to refer me to the Neurology Department at the nearest hospital.

The hospital visits for additional tests were already unpleasant (I underwent a lumbar puncture, MRI, and blood tests), but what made the experience even more challenging was the way they delivered the diagnosis and prognosis. I recall a female neurologist, around my husband's and my age, casually announcing the multiple sclerosis diagnosis. It was evident that this was just routine for her, as she had likely delivered such news to countless others before us.

Although I had researched a little about MS, I was still unaware of what it would really mean, and the course of action that conventional medicine would advise me to take. I wasn't even aware that there was "no cure". So, when I was informed that I needed to start medication immediately, I honestly thought I would be on it for ten days, and then I would be fine. All the symptoms would disappear, and I would move on with my life as normal. But it didn't work like that. This medication was Copaxone (an injection I needed to give myself every day), and it was to become my new life.

I remember the neurologist excitedly revealing to us a box of syringes that I could choose from, depending on what color I'd like. We were sitting there like dazzled rabbits in front of a car's headlights, unable to make sense of the current situation, yet this woman was eager for us to choose a color of the syringe before she saw her next patient. And I was expected to inject myself every day for the rest of my life. It really was like a horror movie. I just wanted to wake up!

"My husband and I want to start a family," I said.

"You can't start a family while you're on this medication. If that is what you want, then you should start it now before you go on the medication," said the female neurologist, with a framed photo of her two beautiful children on her desk. I felt like I had just been punched in the stomach. I was already struggling to keep myself on my feet and go to the bathroom alone without being pregnant. I couldn't possibly imagine carrying a baby while feeling like this. I knew in my heart it wouldn't be sensible. Honestly, it was all quite difficult to process. This was when I was sent home to rearrange my house to accommodate a wheelchair.

I had now been given a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis, and the picture being portrayed to me was not pretty. The diagnosis told me what I had, but it didn't tell me why I had it. No hope was offered to me—only medication, and that wasn't going to cure me. It was only going to slow down the progression of the disease. There must be something I could do. "This truly can't be it!" I thought.

I now had a new passion and purpose in life: to get answers as to why I had MS! This soon consumed my every waking second. My questions weren't answered in conventional medicine. These questions were not taught in traditional, western medical schools. For them, the solution was: "Just take the medication." Today's medical model consists of "name it, blame it, tame it", and that was exactly what they were offering me. Then, I realized that I had been asking all the right questions to the wrong people. At this point, I wanted to get to the root cause of these horrific symptoms, and nothing was going to stop me.

One day, I found something on the internet that transformed my perspective on MS forever. I stumbled across a story of a man who had fallen sick after going to the dentist and having silver fillings put in his mouth, which resulted in an MS diagnosis. It was a light-bulb moment for me! I, too, had fallen sick just after a visit to the dentist. What material were my fillings made from? It was silver, right? Turns out, not entirely. Silver fillings are 50% mercury; only 35% is silver. Mercury is a

neuron toxic. Could it be responsible for my neurological symptoms? I needed to find out.

I now realize that toxins can interfere with bodily functions. When the body begins to lose function, investigating toxins becomes crucial. Unfortunately, this investigation didn't take place within the Neurology Department at the hospital because it's not their focus when a patient exhibits nervous system problems. Another thing I've learned is that the sicker you are, the more toxins you may have in your body, including mold, heavy metals like mercury and lead, and so on. But back then, this was all new to me, a revelation that led me down a whole new rabbit hole - one that excited me, and I had no desire to come out of anytime soon.

After discovering all this about mercury and the neurological symptoms it can cause, I had convinced myself that I didn't have MS after all, but I actually had mercury poisoning. I just knew I had to get all this mercury out of my mouth.

There are many things I'd like to highlight here about the removal of "silver" (mercury) amalgam fillings. Removing mercury fillings is not for the faint hearted. You need to be super careful to make sure that the safe, appropriate precautions are taken when removed. Finding a certified International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology (IAOMT) dentist will guarantee you are protected, using the "SMART protocol".

Prior to any dental procedures aimed at removing mercury fillings, it's crucial that the client maintains regular and daily bowel movements, ensuring they are not constipated. Addressing nutrient deficiencies should be a priority also, making it highly advisable to collaborate with a qualified nutritional therapist or Functional Medicine Practitioner several months in advance. The good stuff needs to be put in the body first before you take any of the bad stuff out. Removing mercury fillings from your mouth does not mean you're cured of MS. I've had all my silver fillings removed from my mouth, and I still live with MS. However, my health has significantly improved after having had them removed. As I stated before, if the dentist does not remove mercury correctly, you can become even sicker—this is what happened to me.

Now, here's the thing which fascinates me. Toxins like fat. Mercury loves fat. What are our brains made out of? What is the myelin sheath that is being destroyed in MS made out of? Yes—fat. If Mercury loves fat, and I had mercury in my mouth, it makes perfect sense to me that this toxin may well be a contributing factor to my health problems. The mouth is

located quite close to our brain. We have what's called the blood brain barrier, and this usually keeps things out that shouldn't be there. However, mercury is a toxic substance that can cross over quite easily, and when it does, it is keen to nestle quite comfortably in our brain. What I would like to better understand is this: we are told that in MS, the immune system is attacking itself and destroying the myelin sheath of the nerve. But why is it doing this? Is it because it detects a foreign invader in the body (like mercury) and reacts by attacking it? I prefer to think of my immune system as a defender, so I struggle to comprehend why it would attack me without a clear reason. If it's attacking me to protect me, then I can understand that. Or is it actually mercury or other toxins that are physically damaging the nerve networks and potentially responsible for destroying the fatty tissue called myelin? I had an unwelcome 'guest' in my brain, and this intruder was ruining my life.

Once mercury has reached the brain, it is not easy to remove. With the support of a naturopath, I started removing mercury. At one point, I removed too much mercury too quickly, and it was this that left me paralyzed from the chin down for several weeks. This took me to a dark place I never thought I would find myself. I remember one evening when everything had really gotten to me. I couldn't even feel my husband's hand touching my body. I could only feel it when he touched my face. I'd had enough; I just couldn't take any more. I didn't want to die, but I also didn't want to live like this.

That evening, I told my husband that in the morning, I wanted to contact EXIT. EXIT provides assisted suicide here in Switzerland. My mind was made up. I didn't want my gorgeous, dashing husband to be my carer. He didn't sign up for this! I remember that evening as if it were yesterday. We cried and cried as we clung to each other. I couldn't feel his touch, but I could feel his love. That night, we prayed. I learned something that evening about prayer that I didn't know before: True prayer requires no words; it's something words cannot express. We prayed as we clung together, tears streaming down our faces.

The next morning when we woke up, I rubbed my fingertips together like I often did, expecting to feel nothing. That morning was different; I felt something! I could actually FEEL my fingertips! Words could not express the pure joy I felt. I didn't just experience joy; I also regained hope.

I abandoned the thought of Assisted Suicide immediately. I felt such an inner strength and purpose that my health would improve. I would have to do the work, but I would get all that mercury out of me, and my health

would be better than it's ever been. I remember being on the seat at the kitchen table and saying to my husband with so much conviction and determination, which I know every cell in my body heard: "I WILL get better! And when I get better, I'm going to go on and help other people, too." I had an even greater purpose and passion. This was going to be my source of motivation in the months ahead and continues to be so today.

I know mercury is extremely good at what it does in that it fills a cavity really well and isn't expensive. However, every time you drink a hot cup of tea, a vapor is released that crosses over our blood brain barrier, causing havoc to the nervous system. There's a good video available online on this topic explaining how mercury vapor is released during chewing, removal, or placement. You can watch the video by looking up the title called "SMOKING TEETH = POISON GAS" on YouTube.

Over the years, dentists' health has raised concerns due to their close association with mercury. Dentistry has historically had high suicide rates (source: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/bcpt.13199>). Recent research suggests that dentists' suicide rates have improved, likely linked to reduced use of mercury amalgam fillings. Since 2018, the European Union banned amalgam fillings for children under fifteen and pregnant or breastfeeding women. Despite its high toxicity, some dental procedures still use this material. Several European countries, like Germany, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, have already banned its use, with others in the process. The UK is now planning to phase out mercury amalgam fillings for environmental reasons.

Remember the Mad Hatter in Alice in Wonderland? He made hats. In that century, they used mercury to stiffen the felt. Many people with this occupation developed tremors, distorted vision, confused speech, and even psychosis. Mercury is known to affect the nervous, digestive, and immune system. Later on, I discovered that not only did I have high levels of mercury in my body, but I also had lead.

I believe, and I've personally demonstrated, that reducing the toxic load in my body helped improve my health and restore its balanced state. You've probably heard the saying: "We are what we eat." I prefer to think of it another way: "We are what we eat, drink, breathe, touch, and can't eliminate." What can't you currently eliminate from your body that may be keeping you sick? For me, it was mercury.

But what is mercury? Mercury is a natural substance found in the earth's crust. It can be released into the environment when there's a volcano eruption. Human activity is often the cause of mercury release. Why is it

so dangerous? Because of its fumes. You can't see its vapors, but they can travel far and wide. A broken thermometer would expose you to hazardous vapors of mercury. These levels that are released can be absorbed by the lungs and are known to have negative effects on the kidneys and brain. They have also been shown to accumulate in certain tissues of the body. Mercury can be found in various sources, including thermometers, fluorescent lights, batteries, light bulbs, dental fillings, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, coal, large fish (such as tuna and swordfish), jewelry, paint, blood pressure gauges, and contact lens solution.

The APO-E 4 gene is a known major risk factor for neurodegenerative diseases, including Alzheimer's disease. This gene has demonstrated a reduced ability to eliminate and detoxify mercury. Research has indicated that individuals with the APO-E 4 gene may be more susceptible to various diseases linked to mercury exposure. If Alzheimer's disease is prevalent in your family, there's a potential risk of carrying the APO-E4 gene, which could decrease your capacity to eliminate mercury. Alzheimer's is in my family.

I am not a doctor, but I consider it disappointing, saddening, and terribly worrying that mercury exposure is not investigated after an MS diagnosis in our current medical model within Western Medicine, especially when we have studies to show a potential link with neurodegenerative diseases. Thankfully, within functional medicine, this link is known, and it is taken very seriously. We ask the important questions to understand the client and their health journey: What has happened in this person's life to make them so sick? What toxins have they been exposed to? Could their occupation be exposing them to toxins?

In 1989, the Swedish Journal of Biological Medicine suggested an association between multiple sclerosis and high amounts of mercury. It reported that people with MS showed higher levels of mercury in their spinal fluid than the average person. <https://www.iomcworld.org/open-access/a-hypothesis-and-additional-evidence-that-mercury-may-be-an-etiological-factor-in-multiple-sclerosis.pdf>

In the *Journal of Multiple Sclerosis* 2020, Vol. 7, Issue 3, Robert Siblingud & Joachim Mutter wrote, "Studies have found a correlation between MS and dental cavities and dental amalgams. The greatest source of mercury comes from dental amalgams, according to the WHO. Previous studies have shown MS symptoms and physiological changes improve, following dental amalgam removal." The study concluded that "mercury is possibly an etiological factor in multiple sclerosis".

Below are some other studies of interest:
Other study 2012 PMID: 22068727
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22068727/>

Study in 2018 PMID: 29959651
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29959651/>

A Study in 2023 ‘Potentially toxic elements in the brains of people with Multiple Sclerosis’
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36635465/>
PMID: 36635465

A person’s reaction to mercury will depend on that person’s individual health status and their genetic predisposition and environmental factors, although I personally do not believe that there is any safe level of this toxin for the human body. People can live with mercury fillings their entire life and never receive an MS diagnosis. I know plenty of people who have a mouth full of silver fillings, and they are currently living well.

There are many factors to consider, and a “one-size-fits-all approach” does not work. No two people are the same. I know that drug modifying therapies (DMT’s) are often given to people diagnosed with MS, and they can certainly slow down the progression of the disease. But, if a toxin remains in the person’s body, no DMT is ever going to make it better in the long term.

Although it was eleven years ago, I remember the day well when I shared the link I had discovered between mercury and neurological symptoms with the neurologist, only to be laughed at. He told me that I was talking bulls**t! Had I not asked these questions and sought the right help, I would still be sick.

I remember this particular neurologist turning to my husband and saying to him, “Your wife is in serious denial of her diagnosis.” In other words, he just wanted me to take the medication, accept everything he said, and stop asking questions he clearly couldn’t answer. If I had listened to everything he had said and accepted it all, I know I wouldn’t be walking up the Swiss mountains, as I do every day now while living with MS.

After detoxing from heavy metals, I became firmly convinced that I didn’t have MS despite the diagnosis. I was living a healthy life and wanted to maintain it. So, I committed to a three-year nutrition study,

commuting every other weekend from Geneva, Switzerland to Edinburgh, Scotland. This was a time long before Zoom calls!

This entire challenging experience allowed me to see that my health was MY responsibility—no one else’s, not my husband’s, not my siblings’, not my parents’. It’s not even my doctors’ responsibility. It’s the action I take daily to go in the direction of health and not disease—from the thoughts I think, to the foods I buy (which enter my body, telling it how to feel and function), to the company I keep, to the hours I sleep, to what I put on and in my body. There’s a lot to consider, but it’s all possible, and extremely important when prioritizing progressive health. It’s about creating a new lifestyle that fits well for you and your body. It’s not a diet; it’s a lifestyle.

I have chosen never to claim MS; instead, I say, “I was given the diagnosis of MS,” and there’s a lot I can do about it. I consider that way of viewing the diagnosis to be way more empowering for me. Many people have expressed the need to come to terms with the diagnosis and to “accept” it. If that works for them, then that’s wonderful; I respect that. Personally, I have no desire to accept MS. I don’t see why I should accept something I would rather not have. I had to accept way too much in other areas of my life where I had no choice in the matter. But with MS, I can choose how I view it, and how I deal with it.

When I discovered the connection not only between mercury and MS, but also feeling the HUGE improvement in my health after my mercury fillings were removed, a lot of anger surged within me. Anger that I allowed the dental professionals to put such a toxic substance in my mouth, which I believe triggered some of the most horrendous neurological symptoms.

Wayne Dyer once said, “All blame is a waste of time.” And so it is. I needed to let all the hurt and anger go. There was a lot of stuff that I had to work through. This is where journaling and having a coach helped me.

I was living so well for years without any symptoms until last summer—August 2022—and boom! A huge MS flare literally floored me, leaving me unable to walk for six weeks. It came as a shock. I had become complacent. I wasn’t eating the way I knew I should be.

During lockdown, I became slightly obsessed with sourdough bread. Sourdough is known for its health benefits, but it still contains some gluten, if it is not gluten-free. MS and gluten are not friends. I should

have known better. It was an extremely hot summer here in Switzerland, and I had experienced a huge emotional stress. One morning at the beginning of August 2022, I woke up to a lack of feeling on the left side of my face—completely numb. This got worse over the next few days, and within the week, I was no longer able to walk. It was scary but not like before. This time it was different. This time, I knew why I had the flare and what I could do about it. I had been here before. Again, I felt that deep, quiet inner peace.

A couple of months earlier, I was in Edinburgh, and I attended a talk by Dr. Rangan Chatterjee, who is a doctor for the National Health Service (NHS) in England, UK, but he is also a Functional Medicine Practitioner. His talk was incredibly helpful, but one thing he said that evening, as it rained torrentially outside, was that emotions are real.

When he uttered those words, I felt like he was speaking directly to me, as if no one else was in the room. Gosh....he was so right. Emotions ARE real. They can have a huge, negative impact on our bodies when living with multiple sclerosis. And here I was, two months later, proving the truth of those words. It was a shocker.

So, what did I do about it? I contacted the people close to me and told them my decision to switch off my phone for the month of August. I needed no distractions and no electrical devices. After all, it was the communication relayed down through this little object that contributed to my now flare. I turned it right off and put it in a drawer, away from my view. I felt a sigh of relief immediately after. Everything's going to be okay...

The most frustrating thing about that flare in August is I know I could have prevented it. I lost the function of my legs and my left hand for several weeks, but thankfully, function was restored again within a few weeks. Within conventional medicine when function is lost, patients are often told that it will not return. I have proved that it can, and it has, but it took a lot of work on my part. It was anything but easy. I didn't take any pharmaceutical medicine, and I still don't. I am not against medication. It has its place. I might have to take it later on, who knows? But right now, I have chosen not to. One of the great things about life is that we get to choose and decide what is best for us as individuals.

I have learned that our bodies can repair themselves when given the right environment to do so. What are those conditions? Well, I think this is where individual, personalized nutrition is key. I also think this is where the Wahls Protocol® fits in beautifully; eating foods that your body recognizes and knows what to do with. Within a few weeks, I was back

on my feet again. Now that the heavy metals have been removed from my body which was most certainly driving the progression of MS for me, I don't experience MS symptoms when I eat well. I consider that hugely empowering; the power that lies on my fork.

I recall moments when I couldn't feel anything from my chin down, and my husband had to feed me with a spoon. During those times, it truly felt like the world was collapsing around me, and all I wanted was to die. Strangely, I was more worried about how this diagnosis was affecting my dear husband more than myself. That's the reality, a diagnosis touches the lives of more than just the person receiving it.

The MS diagnosis can be just the beginning of a whole new, rather wonderful world, like it was for me. I see it as an extraordinary invitation to live life differently from how you lived before and from the people around you. You start to see things, people, places, and situations very differently. To me, MS stands for "Multiple Strengths". I always knew I was strong, but MS has pushed me to my limits. I am way stronger than I ever knew I was.

I know there are some terrific neurologists out there, but unfortunately, I didn't meet one until very recently when I discovered a prestigious specialist in the field. I was pleasantly surprised at how interested he was in me and my story. He didn't speak down to me or swear at me, and he certainly did not dismiss anything I shared. He was not like any of the other medical professionals I had previously seen. I now have a truly fabulous neurologist whom I trust, respect, and admire. Having a yearly appointment with him has become crucial to me. However, it took time—ten years—to find the right one for me. Seek out a neurologist who truly listens and understands you.

"Disease is an imbalance. You have too many things that you don't need and not enough of what you do need."—Dr. Sydney Baker. I certainly can relate to that.

MS—no one gets it, unless they've got it. Not everyone will understand your journey. That's fine. It's not their journey to make sense of; it's yours. The most important thing is that YOU understand why you've got it, why you've arrived at this place with compromised health, and what you can do about it. This is where functional medicine comes in and shines!

We can be grateful for medical intervention. Conventional Medicine is fantastic for acute health issues. If I break a leg, I am going to the

Accident and Emergency (A&E), and I will be so grateful that they are able to put it back together again! It's incredible. However, when it comes to chronic health conditions, autoimmune conditions, multiple sclerosis—there is no medication that can cure them. It may help slow down the progression of the disease, but it will continue to advance until dietary and lifestyle changes are implemented, and the underlying cause is identified and addressed. Nothing changes if nothing changes.

After my diagnosis, I was seeking support. I thought by writing an open, honest letter to the people I considered close to me, telling everyone at the same time what the doctors had announced to me, I'd be supported. I read so many amazing accounts of people who shared their health concerns and diagnoses and were met with incredible support. However, this was not my experience. The reality was people didn't know what to do with what I had just told them. I was often met with silence. It's like they were scared of it—scared that they themselves would “catch it”, as if it were contagious. I longed to make sense of my alarming health situation as my body progressively shut down with each passing day. I was desperate for support but was struggling to find it. However, the whole experience taught me that I don't need lots of people in my life. I just need the right people. I have that now. It's important you have that, too. It's not the quantity, it's the quality.

Any experience that allows us to understand and enter another person's experience is worth going through. It's a true blessing to connect with people who have and are experiencing similar health challenges. I often have people say to me with tears streaming down their cheeks, “You're the first person I've spoken to that gets it.” Having that said to me makes everything I've experienced worth it. I only get it because I've got it. It's a real privilege to be that “first person”. MS has provided a unique opportunity for me to cultivate deep and meaningful relationships, and it's also been an effective filter for the people in my life.

If you don't believe your health is going to improve, I guarantee it won't. It won't because you won't be doing anything to change it. However, if you have hope, and health begins with hope, there is a heck of a good chance that your life will change for the better.

I have huge respect for the Medical Profession, but I've learned that you don't have to believe everything the neurologist says. What my neurologist was telling me was not on my vision board! Why would I want to attach a wheelchair to it just because he said so?

Within functional medicine, we dig deep into what's causing and driving the symptoms and creating DIS-ease in the body. This is so unique and individual. What may be causing and driving your symptoms, won't be what was driving mine. A personalized, individual approach is key here. MS isn't going anywhere. If you have been diagnosed with it, currently, there is no cure, so it's going to accompany you throughout your life. For me, I prefer it to be more like a silent partner rather than the CEO. I thrive despite MS; I'm not confined to a wheelchair as I was once told I would be. The future remains uncertain, but that's true for everyone, isn't it? My focus is on living a life today that my future self will be grateful for.

What has enabled me to be the CEO of my life is identifying my personal antecedents, triggers, and mediators (ATM's). These will all differ from person to person. I invite you to go to my website and download my free workbook, "Surviving to Thriving: 3 Simple Steps that have transformed my life living with MS". It will describe to you in more detail the benefits of knowing your personal ATM's and what you can do about them.

I owe so much to the incredible, selfless individual Dr. Terry Wahls, who was ridiculed and dismissed by other health professionals and fellow neurologists for bringing to everyone's attention that food really does matter. After she changed her diet and lifestyle, she was able to get out of a tilt-reclining wheelchair! Truly transformational! I now live my life on a Wahls Paleo™ Level 2. I have no desire to ever put gluten, dairy, or eggs past my lips again! When I do, I FEEL it and suffer for it. This was why I had my flare last year.

It hasn't been easy, but nothing worthwhile in life ever is. This applies to changing your diet and lifestyle. The taste of health tastes way better than any cake or cheese ever could! But it's a choice. And I can now easily choose the choice that gives me good results because I am super clear on my personal "why" and "what" I need my health for. Without knowing those things, I don't think I would be as committed as I am.

My health relies on me making the best decisions I can. If I don't, there will be consequences for me, and those consequences are not something I want. Just after getting married, I expected my husband to lead me to the bedroom. Instead, he was leading me to the bathroom! I had no strength in my legs to get there myself. I really have no desire to ever go back there. To achieve that, there are things I need to do and things I must avoid on a daily basis. My health depends on it.

Something I consider extremely important is checking in with myself more than I check my phone. I actually have a love/hate relationship with the mobile phone. Yes, I enjoy it. It keeps me connected to friends and family back home in Scotland, and I use it for my business, connecting with my Instagram followers. But sometimes I feel I could quite easily live without one. Anytime I have experienced dry eyes or broken sleep, you can be sure the fault lies with technology!

MS has really changed me. The thing is, I had to change. Before the arrival of MS, I was living a life that I didn't necessarily choose, but it was all I knew. MS allowed me to stop, reflect, and really consider how I was living. MS changed how I saw the world around me and the people in it. I began seeing things differently and started listening more to what people didn't say, and started to see what people didn't do. I became more discerning. I quickly discovered that people show us what we need to see, and it wasn't always easy to accept this new reality.

Another way in which MS has changed me is I don't go along with things I don't want. If that means being misunderstood, then so be it. There were very few people there for me after my MS diagnosis. It's important to me that I listen to my gut and live in alignment with my values. I'm not interested in living my life for the approval of other people.

When I was training to become a Wahls Health Protocol Practitioner, I remember a module where she encouraged us to think of the gifts of our circumstances—gifts that MS has brought to us. I really do believe that Dr. Wahls's diagnosis of MS has been a gift to the world. What she's done and continues to do for neurology is impressive. This would never have happened if she had not gone through what she did. Her grit is to be admired and applauded.

MS has given me many gifts. It forced me to come out of the fast lane. For the first time in my life, at thirty-four years of age, I discovered that there was a slow lane. You know the hard shoulder at the side of the motorway? Well, that's where I ended up. My body just stopped. However, those signs were there when I was belting along the highway with my foot on the gas. Living life in the slow lane serves me much better. I don't see the point of trying to get anywhere fast; I just enjoy the journey. The view is way better, too! You see way more. You don't see very much when your foot is on the gas.

MS has also given me a passion. I discovered what my strengths were as MS put me in a position where I automatically used them without even

realizing I had them. Knowing your personal strengths is important. When you attach your values to your goals, you can get to where you want to be. That's what I've done, and I believe anyone can do that, too. Our bodies want us to be well. They've been created to function in a certain way, but sadly, life and its stressors can disrupt things. Often, it leaves us in a place where we have to unlearn a few things, embrace, and learn some new things.

One thing I realize when I look over the previous years and the many events of my life, MS didn't just happen, and it didn't happen overnight. I think of the mold exposure crawling up my bedroom wall when I was a kid, the lack of vegetables in my diet, the lack of sleep from working night shifts in a bakery, the childhood stresses that had a huge negative impact on my nervous system at such a young age, the lack of vitamin D due to living in Scotland, Epstein Barr Virus which I had at age twenty-two, and what tipped me was the exposure to mercury when I allowed a dentist to put four silver fillings in my mouth.

My bucket was already full of stressors and toxins, but this exposure, along with the stress of closing a shop, arranging our marriage, and moving to a foreign country just tipped the toxic bucket. I find the bucket analogy very helpful to understand how I came to arrive at the diagnosis of multiple sclerosis. This bucket represents our life, and it gets filled with things that are toxic. Once it gets full, it spills over, often displaying symptoms of disease. It's time to empty that bucket. I am a big believer in having to look back before we can move forward. It has helped me to make sense of the diagnosis and why I was given it. I also know what I can do about it, and I do that well.

I have read many books over the years, but the one that made a huge impression on me was recommended by my acupuncturist. It's called *The Biology of Belief*, written by Bruce Lipton. What a read! I strongly believe that this book helped me change the trajectory of the disease, not be defined by MS, and embrace the knowledge that MS happened for me, not to me. It also helped me to be crystal clear as to what meaning I gave the diagnosis. In one chapter, the author speaks about the importance of what we think and believe about a health challenge. He writes in this book about a man who was diagnosed with cancer of the esophagus. He was treated for it, but the doctors said that it would return. The man died shortly after his diagnosis. The discovery that was made after his death has had a huge impact on me. When they performed the autopsy on him, they found very little cancer. There wasn't even enough cancer to kill him. It's written that "he died with cancer, but not from cancer". The reason the man died was because he believed he was going

to die. Since I read that chapter in the book, I came to realize the importance of my thoughts. I needed to be careful with what I thought, what I said to myself about my diagnosis, and what meaning I gave it.

Immediately after my MS diagnosis was given to me, I decided NOT to believe what the neurologists were trying to convince me. One day, I discharged myself from the hospital. I really didn't want to hear any more of their negativity. It wasn't healthy, and it wasn't benefiting my brain in any way!

Gandhi said: "Your beliefs become your thoughts. Your thoughts become your words. Your words become your actions. Your actions become your habits. Your habits become your values. Your values become your destiny." I know I have been given the diagnosis of MS, but I don't believe what I was told would be the prognosis. Why do I have to believe that? It doesn't do me any good! I believe I can live well with MS, and I have, and I am, and I will continue to, so long as I focus on prioritizing progressive health using the principles of functional medicine.

In the same book, Lipton mentions the Placebo Effect, but he also makes mention of the Nocebo. He describes the Placebo Effect as a "positive suggestion that improves health". The opposite to this is what's called the "Nocebo Effect", and this is when a negative suggestion damages health. Everything I was told eleven years ago had the HUGE potential to negatively affect me and cause damage. Therefore, I choose to focus only on the positive suggestions! Have you ever considered that maybe your MS symptoms have worsened because you were told by your neurologist that they were only going to get worse? Everything the mind says, the body hears. You cannot separate the mind from the body.

Conventional medicine dismissed me. They listened only to reply. It was all about them and what they could do for me by providing medication to slow down the progression of the disease. Functional medicine, on the other hand, provided me with an abundance of hope. They listened with the intent to understand my unique needs, looking beyond symptoms and addressing the root cause. It was all about me. They encouraged me to explore everything I could do to support my health, emphasizing the importance of diet and lifestyle to create health.

I'm now a Wahls Protocol® Health Practitioner, and I'm thrilled to be joining Dr. Wahls and her tribe of Health Practitioners in creating an epidemic of health! I recently did an allergy test confirming an allergy to eggs, which really surprised me. While undergoing the Wahls Protocol® training, I learned that eggs rank as the third most common allergen, and

interestingly, they are excluded from the Wahls Protocol. We know that eggs can be a powerhouse of nutrition, and many people benefit from them, but many people can react to them too. I used to eat a lot of eggs, but since removing them completely from my diet, I feel better because of it.

In the summer, breakfast often consists of chia seed pudding with berries or a green smoothie. In the winter, I often enjoy a hot vegetable soup in the morning or some salmon and vegetables. Anytime I eat, I will have some protein to balance my blood sugar. I eat nine to twelve vegetables a day. It's not as difficult as it may sound when you can hide them in soups and smoothies. I try to eat within an eight-hour window.

These past eleven years have been hard. People look at my beautiful, post-card images that I take and share on Instagram and my life here in the picturesque Switzerland, but they don't see the half! The journey, the heartache, and the work I had to put in to get where I am now...and the work continues. Getting to where I am with my health has been distressing, as well as fulfilling. While people my age were getting married and starting families, I was endeavoring to navigate a new life with MS and educating myself about functional medicine to slow down the progression of the disease.

When I couldn't walk, I promised myself that when I could walk again, I would never stop walking! I have kept that promise to myself, and I aim to walk 10,000 steps every day. Sometimes I can walk all 10,000 steps at once with my husband, up in the Swiss Alps where I live. Sometimes I just do 5,000 steps in the morning and 5,000 steps in the afternoon. Walking is non-negotiable for me.

I've recently returned from a visit to my home country, Scotland, where, one day, I walked an incredible 25,000 steps by Loch Ness. Just eight months prior, I couldn't walk at all. So, whoever you are reading this, perhaps you are also experiencing a loss of function in your body and struggling to walk. I believe that with the right support, your health can improve, just as mine has.

YOU have to do the hard work to live well with MS—and it IS hard work. It really is. I'm not going to sugar coat it. Change is hard, but change can be worth it. You don't need to do it alone. Get yourself a Nutritional Therapist or Functional Medicine Practitioner who knows and understands what's going on in the body with MS, understands how environmental toxins affect the body, and what needs to be considered. Get yourself a neurologist who fills you with hope—not fear. Look at the

people who are living well with MS. Look at the recent research studies being done. Look at Dr. Terry Wahls and read her books. There's so much hope all around you if you choose to see it, focus on it, and be inspired by it.

What do you need your health for?

What does your health mean to you?

What is your WHY?

These questions are key when prioritizing progressive health. It will take work. It's hard not to be eating or living like everyone else around you. But I think life in a wheelchair would be even harder. I know what I would rather choose. As Simon Alexander Ong wrote in his book *Energize*: "Choose your hard." That's what I'm doing, and that's what I encourage you to do, too. Your hard may become phenomenally great. I hope it will.

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.