

BEATING MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Empowering Stories of Self-Healing and Thriving

AGOTA NAWROTH
& PAIGE NEWSOME

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To my loved ones,

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

To the multiple sclerosis community,

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

With love and deepest admiration,
Agota Nawroth

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

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

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

With heartfelt appreciation,
Agota Nawroth

AUTHOR'S NOTE

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

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

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

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Final Note

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

– *Greg Anderson*

DISCLAIMER

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

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Story by

HELENA KNIGHT

Diagnosed in 2000

Currently 63 years old

Lives in Redditch, United Kingdom

My story—where to start? As Julie Andrews from the *Sound of Music* would say, “Let’s start at the very beginning...a very good place to start.”

I have many memories of me as a young child. I was vibrant and bursting with energy. At the age of eight, my potential as a gifted swimmer was acknowledged, marking the start of my path as a competitive swimmer. I trained seven days a week, both in the pool and at the gym. I enjoyed competing and won many awards. I even competed overseas at the club level and represented my county (Yorkshire), just missing out on the trials for the 1976 Ontario Olympics. My best event was 100m butterfly, and I last swam competitively at the age of thirty-six! I was super fit then, and that was only four years before receiving my multiple sclerosis (MS) diagnosis. In addition to my swimming skills, I had a talent for art. I wrote poetry and performed it on stage. I was even published in the local newspaper multiple times. I also enjoyed other artistic activities like painting, drawing, and working with clay. Looking back, even at the age of thirteen, my writing was quite political.

In 1991, I spent the year traveling around the world for thirteen months with my then partner Chris. We traveled to India, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, USA, and Canada. Looking back, I suspect that I experienced the initial signs of MS during that time, but it's difficult to determine as the whole journey was challenging. Perhaps my fatigue was due to the physical strain of travel, lack of sleep, walking, climbing, etc. I know I wouldn't have changed anything, but considering my diagnosis in 2000, I'm glad I traveled when I did because I know I wouldn't have been able to do it afterward.

Upon my return to the UK in February 1992, I fulfilled another wish from my bucket list by starting and successfully establishing a tearoom in Kenilworth, Warwickshire. I loved baking all the cakes, something I still love to do, even though I don't eat cake myself! Within the first two years, Time for Tea was nominated for "Tea Place of the Year", and I had the privilege of being interviewed by Bruce Richardson from the US for his book, *Great Tearooms of Britain*. It was a beautiful hardcover book that dedicated six pages to me and my business. It was truly an honor!

In 1997, fate brought my ex-husband into my life when he visited my tearoom as a Food Hygiene Inspector. The rest is history! I never wanted to marry or have children, but I'm afraid the universe had other plans. Before I knew it, I was pregnant (planned). I met my husband just a few days after he had separated from his wife and daughter. He appeared very sad and carried emotional pain in his eyes. Interestingly, I later heard from others that he started telling everyone about meeting an incredible woman (me). At that time, he had made a personal promise not to seek or engage in any relationship for at least two years. So, it's puzzling why, after six weeks, we started our relationship.

We got married in early April 1998—a lovely day with family and friends, but deep down, I knew that I'd made a big mistake. It took me a long time to realize that I married a narcissist. I was pregnant when we got married, and despite not wanting to, I felt that I owed it to my parents. We had discussions about having a child because he had already left his daughter, and as I approached forty, I felt it was my last chance. I genuinely wanted our child, Bertie. I'm glad I had him when I did because I went through menopause at age forty-two! The day of our marriage marked the beginning of a pattern where he didn't engage in meaningful conversation.

Not long after we married, we moved to another city (Worcester) where we bought our first marital home. Three weeks after moving, I gave birth to my beautiful son Albert (Bertie) by C-section. Once again, my husband showed no sign of affection or empathy for what I was going through!

Nine months later, while on holiday, I experienced my first recognizable signs of MS: tingling in my hands, feet, and legs, as if ice water was running through them. When I returned home, the symptoms had subsided, and I chose not to take any action.

I'm sure you can tell by now that I felt incredibly lonely in my marriage but held on for seventeen years. Eventually, after he left me and took my son, I had a well-deserved emotional breakdown. But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

One day while walking my son in his stroller, I passed by a building with a sign in the window asking for volunteers. I went inside and shared my information. The organization was called the Worcester Association for the Blind. They matched me with a lady named Margaret, who both Bertie and I knew as Auntie Dimp. We loved her and were more than happy to visit her on a regular basis until her passing, a couple of years later. I wanted to continue working with the organization, and they asked me if I could work with members and help teach them to cook and bake. I happily accepted...until something unexpected happened.

My eye became very painful, and I suddenly lost sight in that eye overnight. Even though my legs were stiff due to my MS acting up again, I managed to walk to the town. There, I visited an optician's office who was kind enough to take care of my son Bertie while I was there. The optician gave me a letter to give to my General Practitioner (GP). As I was walking to see my GP, guess who I bumped into? It was my husband, who had just come home for lunch. Reluctantly, he accompanied me to see the doctor, showing his unhappiness. The doctor gave me another letter to take to the eye hospital. We went to the hospital by car, but my husband, being himself, didn't want to pay for parking. He parked somewhere else and insisted that I hurry because, in his words, I wasn't dying. Can you believe that? How did he know?

I explained all my symptoms and the timeline to my GP. She sat me down and said, "Well Mrs. Knight, you've told me all about your symptoms. What do you think you've got?" My immediate response was that I either had a brain tumor (which I thought was highly unlikely), or I had multiple sclerosis!

She responded with, “Yes, you probably have MS.”

It was the first time I’d ever spoken those words, and as you can imagine, my husband’s face went ashen! I thought it was multiple sclerosis because of a poster I saw years ago. The poster showed a woman with a body/back shaped like a cello, with her spine ripped out. That image stuck with me for many years.

After seeing two young medics who were reluctant to answer my questions about what they believed was wrong with me, they passed me off to another doctor. This doctor arranged for me to see a neurologist at Redditch Hospital.

My diagnosis became official following magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). I drove myself to Redditch to see Dr. Spilane to receive the news. I went alone, and after receiving the diagnosis, I said, “Thank goodness for that!” I’d rather know what I’ve got than face more testing!

My husband wasn’t with me the day I received my official MS diagnosis. Honestly, I think my husband was also scared, but he never discussed it or talked about our future. My biggest concern after my diagnosis was regarding a lady from my hometown of Bradford who made national news because of her MS. Her situation was severe, and she became concerned about her future to the point of considering assisted suicide. Her husband was supportive until the end. If she had chosen to proceed, she would have had to go to Switzerland. However, while the legal issues in Britain were being scrutinized, she passed away naturally. Hearing her story was incredibly sad and deeply affected me.

Throughout my life, I’ve been surrounded by amazing friends, most of which I’d only recently met following my move to Worcester. They were incredible. In the meantime, my life went on. Not only did I look after my own son, but I also looked after my new friend Laura’s son two days a week. I took on a part-time job, too. In my earlier years, I worked in Sales as a Sales Manager for a brick company. In my later years, I transitioned to realty as an Estate Agent. I found great success and equal enjoyment in both roles!

I had always followed a vegetarian diet. My ex-husband worked in the meat industry, so I went back to eating meat once I got married—wrong decision. When I received my MS diagnosis, I became vegetarian again. I have what I call a “clean” diet. Having read more about MS, I now know I made the right decision! I’ve always had a good diet. As a swimmer, it was imperative that I looked after my body. Although it

wasn't quite as clean as it is now, looking at Dr. Jelinek's book *Overcoming MS*, I realized my diet was exactly what he recommends. After I connected with Talia Halberer in January this year (I found her on social media), my diet became even cleaner. Combined with my focus on positive energy and quantum physics, I experienced a remarkable improvement in just a few weeks. In the past, I have used a cane or a walker, mainly for my vertigo, so that I wouldn't appear drunk while walking. The walker also provided a way for me to rest when I felt tired. However, since working with Talia, I've ditched both! Talia has been a godsend for me, and I will always be indebted to her. She also has MS but has totally reversed her symptoms.

When it comes to my diet, I have made significant changes. Nowadays, I only eat fruits and vegetables, often in the form of smoothies, excluding potatoes. To get my vegetables, I rely on deliveries from a local farm shop. I also go to the supermarket for groceries. I no longer eat eggs, dairy, or sadly, cheese. Sometimes I find vegan alternatives and always use oat milk or another alternative for dairy. I used to put photos of my vegetable deliveries on Facebook/Instagram and the dishes I made from them. People loved it! But that was before I met Talia, so my diet wasn't quite as strict then. I've always enjoyed cooking, but these days, I have to search for and adapt recipes to suit my diet. I stay away from processed food, meat, and saturated fats. I avoid carbs like pasta, rice, etc. I use flax and chia seeds for protein. I also drink three liters of water per day and take vitamins D, B12, magnesium, omega 3, and turmeric supplements. In addition to maintaining a clean diet, I do my best to go to the gym at least two to three times a week. The biggest change in my life is that I've had to give up working.

My sleep has improved compared to before my diagnosis, although it still tends to be interrupted. I find that going to the gym and taking walks helps improve my sleep. I do my best to live a stress-free life; however, if I decide to relocate to beautiful Hereford (where my son lives), then I'm sure my stress level will go through the roof! Hereford is a very flat city, unlike where I live now. During my visit there, I walked many kilometers, covering seventeen in just the first three days! My son, Thomas Albert, has a great job at the university in Hereford and is on the verge of being promoted to Assistant Professor. He teaches Mathematics at NMITE, a specialized university for engineers. His first master's degree was in Chemical Engineering. While I may not think about his father very much, it's evident that he has inherited good genes. Recently, his daughter also got her PhD!

People say that MS is caused by trauma. When asked what my trauma is, I always said, "I got married." I thought I was only joking until I worked

on my history with Talia, and then I really did know that it was not a joke—it was fact. I knew my ex made me physically ill. The very last time I saw him in person, I instantly got double vision. We were supposed to be going on a family camping holiday to Europe with the two kids, but once the car was packed, there wasn't room for me. I was quite relieved if I'm honest. I think it would have been far too stressful for me as every previous family holiday was. The same double vision happened when I knew he was coming home. My son even wrote to his university at the time of his graduation saying that under no circumstances should his dad sit anywhere near his mum.

The symptoms that bother me the most are vertigo and fatigue. But since I started working with Talia, my fatigue has dropped drastically. I've also had issues with swallowing/choking, but even that seems to have stopped. However, my speech can be slurred, especially when I'm tired or stressed, and it hurts me more than anything because I used to give public presentations and speeches. Something I forgot to mention was that I ventured into local politics around 2010-2011. I ran for elections twice, once for District council and once for County council. Although I didn't win, I came in second place with a 40% improvement compared to the previous candidate. It's an accomplishment I'm still proud of!

Despite having had MS for twenty-three years, I've only had three MRI scans, with the last two in the past five or six years. Apart from two years ago when I last saw my neurologist, I have never been offered drugs. The doctor gave me details of a new drug for secondary progressive MS, telling me that I could research it online. He then sent an MS nurse to my house to see if I wanted to take it. I think she already knew the answer: "No, thank you!" At the request of my neurologist, I had two more recent MRI scans since he noticed that I had only previously undergone one. The lesions are located in my brain, but he tells me I have too many to count!

I've always done my very best to live my life as if I don't have MS, but at sixty-three, I guess we all slow down. I've never taken drugs for my MS. I'm sure some people don't understand why, but it works for me. I have an issue with "big Pharma", so I prefer to take a more holistic route. I choose to rely on nutritional supplements.

Thanks to the internet and my local MS Society group, I've connected with many people who also have MS. It took me some time to feel ready to join the society, but around seven or eight years ago, after moving back to Yorkshire, I finally joined. It has been a wonderful opportunity to make new friends who understand the challenge of living with this

disease. Sadly, I've lost some friends along the way. But on a more positive note, I have a friend named Tommy who has MS. He is an incredible person and last year, he captained the Physically Disabled World Cup England Rugby League team to victory in the World Cup. How cool is that? I make sure I surround myself with only positive energy, especially when it comes to my choice of friends! I have a "tribe" of my own.

Another friend of mine I'd like to mention is Tracy Dawn, who I met for the first time when she came to an MS Society meeting. At the time, she hadn't received a diagnosis, but it was clear that she had MS. It took several months before she finally received an official diagnosis, and by that time, she was told that she'd probably been living with it for fourteen years. That was over four years ago. Since then, she's written her story in a book titled, *I'm Still Smiling*. I take my hat off to her. Sadly, she's a single parent for her nine-year-old son with autism. Dealing with these challenges is a struggle for her every day. Despite her difficulties, she is a seriously talented musician, although she can no longer perform. I have great respect for her. If you were to read Tracy Dawn's book, you would discover the traumas she has faced in her own life. Her story shows the connection between trauma and the effects it can have on people with MS. Stress made my MS symptoms worse, causing double vision. Stress also gave me anxiety and depression, something I'd never experienced before.

My advice to those who are newly diagnosed is that MS is not a death sentence. Trust your own body's signals and remember that neurologists don't have all the answers. In my opinion, those who truly understand MS are the ones living with this condition. Stay optimistic, practice meditation, engage in physical activity like yoga, and most importantly, never give up!

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.