

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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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

PAIGE NEWSOME

Diagnosed in 2019

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It's Thursday. I'm driving to my OBGYN's office for a check-up, again. Because the deep ache and throbbing like two unforgivably sharp objects wrestling in my uterus has become unmanageable...again. Three months prior, during my last visit, my doctor (who delivered my daughter, giving her a front row seat to all the horrific complications of my pregnancy) gave me disheartening news. She told me that the only solution she had for the unknown cause of my invisible, impossible pain was to perform a partial hysterectomy.

A partial hysterectomy? That seemed a little extreme. Not that I had any more babies planned for my future, but still. Can't your body be thrown into early menopause because of that? I'm only thirty.

Thoughts rushed through my head, like a violent waterfall, drowning out the noise around me.

I'm at a stoplight. I reach over to adjust my seat belt. I despise seat belts that lock on their own—mini straightjackets. As I reach, the belt tightens over my right hip, and a lightning bolt of electric pain shoots like a bullet from my hip down to my toes. A snapping, like a rope being pulled too hard in opposite directions in a game of tug-of-war, occurred simultaneously. Then came the fire. The scathing, hot pain of flames engulfed my right hip.

How is this possible? This can't be happening...AGAIN.

During the first trimester of my pregnancy, I experienced this same pain while getting off the couch one day. Three doctor visits later, with nothing but the option of narcotic pain medication to help me move, my primary care physician (PCP) decided it was shingles.

“Shingles? Isn't that a rash?”

“No, sometimes it can manifest as severe pain without the rash, or vice versa.”

I had never heard of this before. It felt weird. I always listen to my “feeling”. But she's the doctor. She knows more than me...right?

I agreed to put the antiviral medication into my pregnant body, exposing my daughter's undeveloped immune system to God knows what. But this pain—this fiery hot pain from the seat belt—while it felt similar, this was heavier. Relentless. Unforgiving.

This was not shingles.

As the day progresses, so does the pain. It is alive—with a mind of its own, wandering into the caverns of my sciatica, and quickly tangling up my spine. I call my trusted physical therapist (PT), a man I had been seeing weekly since an unexplained infection waged war on my intestines a year prior. The “infection” that changed everything, causing my intestines to contract over and over, mimicking labor pains. After an emergency colonoscopy, the only conclusion the doctor could cough up was irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). I have later come to know that this

is a common diagnosis, fed to complicated patients with complicated cases. IBS is the last house at the end of the street; the place they store people they don't know what to do with. As soon as I was stamped with the label, they handed me a pamphlet about the Low FODMAP diet—without any explanation of what IBS was—and threw me out the door. The pain lingered around me like a shadow, studying my every move. No matter how hard you try, you can't outrun your shadow.

I was bed-ridden for months. If I was able to get out for a short walk or do a small round of stretching, I felt I deserved a gold medal. After pleading with my physical therapist for help, he told me that one day of lying in bed is like one week of bedrest on your body. The toll was deafening. Somehow, I had to get up.

I followed the Low FODMAP diet, as best I could from a bed. I cleaned the library out of all their information and cookbooks pertaining to the diet. Initially, it helped the pain immensely! One of the most insightful things it showed me was my intestine's aversion to garlic and onion. But what the gastroenterologist forgot to tell me is that it is not meant to be a long-term diet. It's impossible for your body to receive all the nutrients it needs from this diet alone. Eventually, you are supposed to start adding foods back in. It's an elimination diet—not a way of life. A shiny, golden nugget of wisdom that oh-so-caring doctor forgot to impart on me. I lost thirty pounds in three months.

After hearing my sobs on the phone, describing in between gasps of fire that the hip pain had returned with a vengeance and was accelerating at an alarming rate, my PT says he will stay late to have me in for dry needling. I'll take dry needling over a massage any day. My body likes to fight pain with pain—“if it doesn't hurt, it's not working” mentality. Dry needling has helped me countless times in the past, taking the edge off the pain that was enveloping my body and imprisoning me to my bed. My husband helps me hobble to the car. He opens the door like a gentleman for my daughter. I can't hide the tears anymore. I feel horrible for him. Watching the person you love writhe in pain, and not being able to do a damn thing about it, is pure agony.

We arrive at my PT's office quickly. He and my husband manage to get me on the table, face down. He inserts the needles into my sciatic area and my hip flexors, per usual.

Ouch! That's not normal. This doesn't normally sting.

I don't complain, I just keep going. I don't listen to my "feeling". He's the doctor. He knows more than me, right? He connects the stem units to each needle (there are around twelve), and BOOM! Fireworks of pain shoot up my back and down my legs. This is new. This has never happened before. I'm screaming. I can hear myself screaming, but I am not in my body. Everything goes black.

We arrive home, and my walking is worse. PAIN; it's the only thing I can think, feel, see, hear, touch, or smell. I try to go to bed, but I can't sleep. If I talk, I will scream, so I stay silent. My husband wakes up and asks how I'm feeling. I open my mouth to tell him and only stutters fall out. I can't release the words. Once they reach my tongue, they get stuck, bouncing around. My right shoulder begins jolting up and down, like I'm unsuccessfully trying to match the beat of a song. This is no song. My husband laughs because he thinks I'm joking. I don't return the gesture.

This is not a drill.

We drop my daughter off at my sister's house. My husband speeds me to the emergency room, like he's playing a game of *Grand Theft Auto*. He's just scored the car, and we're on the run from the cops. I love him for that. My caretaker. My hero. My sweet, sweet ride or die.

I can't walk in. He leaves the car running as he jumps out and runs inside to get me a wheelchair. I attempt to tell the nurse at the check-in station my symptoms. Again, stutters and spasms are all I can muster. She picks up her phone, and I'm catapulted to the back. She says the word "code", but that's all I can pick up. The pain is so loud, making the rest of the world inaudible. I am wheeled to a room, packed with computers and one pretentious neurologist. He does a few "follow my finger" tests and takes my vitals, showing zero empathy or compassion as he does so. He asks me to explain my symptoms to him. Haven't they gotten the memo that I'm here because I physically can't explain my symptoms? I try, again, and he thankfully sees I cannot help him understand. My sweet husband steps in and takes over.

Thank you.

I'm beginning to understand what it means when people say you need to advocate for yourself. It's not fair, and it's excruciatingly exhausting, constantly beating people over the head with your information. But in the end, you can truly only rely on yourself.

My husband explains to me, as I'm being wheeled down the hall, that they need to take emergency magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of my brain to ensure that I am not having a stroke. I am an MRI virgin. I am wheeled into a room with a tall, narrow table, surrounded by what looks like a massive innertube. The radiology tech and my husband help me onto the table, lying me back. The tech secures a cage over my face and snaps it shut.

"Don't move, or we'll have to start over. This will take around forty-five minutes."

The whites of my eyes fly open, and my chest tightens and recoils, like a sea anemone that has been unwantedly poked. I'm claustrophobic. He doesn't know that. I can't tell him. I start to panic as the table slowly slides me backward, head-first into the innertube. I feel my husband's warm hand wrap around my foot.

"I've got you," his touch signals, "I'm not going anywhere."

After an eternity in the face cage prison, the intensely sharp noises swirling around my head during the MRI, attempting to hold still for forty-five minutes while spasming, and the endless amounts of breaths while waiting for results, a group of three doctors finally walks in. They introduce themselves as the neurological team assigned to my case. One is holding a manilla folder in his hands, their faces void. The man in the middle steps forward, announcing his authority.

"We have your MRI results. We found one, possibly two, lesions in your brain." No pause for reaction. He quickly pulls the scans out of the folder, places them on a lit-up white board, and turns off the overhead lights. He points to a black spot on the scan and proceeds to explain.

"This lesion is in the white matter in the frontal lobe of your brain. The other possible lesion is in the back."

"So, this is the reason she can't talk?" My husband asks, his face contorted in concern, mixed with frustration and anger at the lack of explanation.

"We aren't positive the lesion is affecting her cognitive function, but it's our best guess. We think she may have multiple sclerosis (MS)." He turns to me. "You didn't have a stroke, and you aren't dying. That's where our

job in the emergency room ends. We suggest you see a neurologist as soon as possible.” He returns the scans back to the manilla folder and hands it to my husband. Stuck to the top is a blue post-it with a name and phone number. They leave the room as swiftly as they came. I did not have a stroke. I am not dying. Thank you, please leave.

To them, I am just a number.

For the next year, I was bound to a wheelchair and/or crutches. My mom had to be with me every day because I couldn’t drive, take care of my daughter, make dinner—I couldn’t even get to the toilet without help. I also needed her to be my mouthpiece at appointments because the stuttering and spasming continued to get only worse.

Overnight the world had become loud. I was sensitive to everything. A thick fog constantly cloaked my brain, making a thought process impossible. My daughter’s adorable laugh was overshadowed by my constant shushing. Overstimulation became the word of the day, every day. I spent the duration of my days during that time (2018-2019), when not at PT or a doctor’s appointment, with headphones in my ears, playing white noise to shut out the intrusive noises the world was using to attack me. Over time, as one can imagine, I became seriously depressed. I am an editor. My degree is in English Writing. I live to read and help others write. The plan my husband and I made when we decided to have our daughter was that he would work full-time, and I would stay home with her and freelance. I could no longer read without becoming confused or nauseous. The lesions in my brain were stealing from me, and each thing they took was a little closer to my core.

I’ve just met with my fourth MS specialist, and I’m still no closer to an actual solution. Everything I know about this horrific disease came from desperate midnight Google searches, and the tidbits of information the doctors are willing to spill. The first specialist took a personal phone call, regarding his upcoming golf game, while my husband and I were sitting directly in front of him, waiting to hear my fate. Bedside manner should be a requirement to graduate medical school. The MRI in the emergency room doesn’t capture the scans as thoroughly as a freestanding clinic, so he reordered them. I had to call his office every day for two weeks just to get the orders for the scans sent to the imaging clinic, which takes them less than five minutes to complete. Like I said before, I was learning how to advocate for myself, and it became a full-time job. Then came two more specialists. One sent me for a spinal tap that came back negative. The hangover headache from a spinal tap is by far the most excruciating

pain I have experienced to this day. I was literally screaming in the emergency room, waiting to receive my blood patch, the only remedy for this symptom. The specialist had told me not to worry, reassuring me that only five percent of people experience the skull-crushing headache.

I am the five percent.

Her diagnosis was that my symptoms were presenting as MS, but the frontal lobe lesion had wrapped itself around something in my brain, which is why she wouldn't officially diagnose and treat me for MS without further confirmation of more lesions. (A blessing in disguise that would come to fruition two years later.) This fourth specialist was the highlight. He is well-known at the University of Colorado Hospital for his work in multiple sclerosis. I was referred to him by a friend of mine with MS, who had seen him and spoke very highly of his bedside manner (cue laughter).

I waited two months for my appointment, which isn't bad when you're working with neurologists in high demand. But when you can't talk, walk, smile, breathe, or participate in your life, two months is hellishly long. The relief I felt when walking into his office and checking-in was palpable. I was desperate for a firm diagnosis and a course of treatment. I was desperate to be me again.

Someone is finally going to care.

My husband wheeled me back when they called my name. My shoulder bounced up and down as I waited excitedly in my wheelchair. The doctor barged in but seemed to have left his impeccable bedside manner at the door. He refused to meet my eyeline, speaking only to my husband. When bound to a wheelchair, you already feel low to the ground. This made me feel even lower, like an annoying piece of gum stuck to the bottom of his shoe. He asked me to walk down the hall and back as best I could. His one and only test. By the time I returned to my wheelchair, tears from the scorching hip pain were streaming down my face. He didn't care. I'm not even sure he watched me walk or what he was looking for, but he met me with, "You don't have MS. You have anxiety. I'm going to call you in a prescription for Zoloft." I was dumbfounded. My husband tried to ask how he could tell that from a simple walk, but the doctor briskly (and rudely) left the room. He was supposed to be my saving grace—the one who wasn't going to give up on me because I wasn't a cut and dry case.

Case closed. Fairytale officially over. To them, I would never be a life—only a number.

My fifth neurologist was my final neurological stop. He was recommended to me by another doctor in my queue. He was a general neurologist, meaning he did not specialize in MS. I figured I'd give it a try since the specialists were failing me, one after the other. He took a long look at my scans, performed a thorough examination of my entire body, and escorted my husband and I back to his office. He was different from the other neurologists. He smiled when he talked, listened to my painful journey without interrupting, and showed empathy. A neurologist with impeccable bedside manner—I could get used to this. We sat in his cozy, light blue office, overlooking the snow-capped Rocky Mountains. He took one more look at my file, put it aside, and looked at me instead. I held my breath.

“From what I can see, you have what is known as clinically isolated syndrome (CIS). This is the first level of multiple sclerosis.”

I exhaled. A diagnosis. Finally.

“You are classified in this area because we are certain you have the one lesion. I can see you are clearly in distress and struggling. I like you, and I want to help you as best I can.”

He wanted to help me. Another exhale.

“I would like to start you on a medication called Tysabri, but if your insurance won't cover it, we will go with another called Gilenya. It won't help with your symptoms, but it will hopefully stop your brain from forming more lesions. We need to order another MRI of your brain before you start. Then, a registered nurse will come to your house to administer your first dose and monitor your vitals for eight hours to ensure your body doesn't react negatively.”

That sounded scary, but hey, my life was already a horror show. I was desperate and willing to take whatever he was offering. I would have stood on my head for eight hours a day if it would have healed me. Desperation brings people to dark caves they never thought they'd be forced to mine. With my diagnosis in one hand and a prescription in the other, I wheeled out of his office, and onto my next phase: solution, or so I thought...

While I was waiting to be seen by these specialists, my PCP, Dr. Judd, was working side-by-side with me, who, as luck would have it, is also a Doctor of Osteopathy (D.O.). He tried endlessly to help me, from injections to adjustments to pain medications—they were simply Band-Aids. Nothing improved my brain function. The witty, funny, snarky, kind, feisty, fiercely loving parts that make-up me had been sucked into the lesion like a blackhole. Every possible “solution” made it worse. I was stagnant. I could feel the “me” I loved slipping away. Depressed does not describe the heaviness of what I felt. I spent months, from sunup to sundown, drenched in tears, my mood constantly swinging. Dr. Judd also realized, through trial and error, that I am what they call “selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI) resistant”, which means that antidepressants do not work effectively on my brain.

I am the five percent.

I saw myself as a burden to everyone in my life. One day, I had been fine, and the next, I was falling to my demise, literally. To say I was hopeless would be a laughable understatement. I wanted to kill myself, kill the pain, kill the burden I was becoming...

During one of my routine check-up appointments, Dr. Judd wheeled in a large, gray machine with eight gigantic, round electrodes, along with their cords, dangling from the sides. “SANEXAS” was written in bold, green letters across the front. A tall glass beaker sat on top, filled with water and yellowish-brown circular sponges. He looked at me, eyes brimming with hope. “I have an idea. Are you ready to get better?”

I mustered “yes” through a broken smile. He held his hand out to me, offering me grace, knowing how beaten down I had become from wrestling with hope. After boosting me on the table, he began attaching the electrodes to my hips, hip flexors, and surrounding areas. He grabbed one sponge at a time, wet it in the beaker, put it on my skin, and sealed it tight with the electrode.

“This is called an E-Stim machine, and it costs more than my car,” he says. I give a little chuckle. He always tries to make me laugh. “It uses electrical pulses in three different ten-minute intervals to activate the muscles and nerves in your legs that aren’t working properly. I’ve seen this machine work miracles. It’s time you get yours.”

And a miracle it was! Initially, it was mildly painful—more so jarring, like hundreds of bees buzzing around under my skin. During my first few visits, my legs flopped around on the table, like a fish stuck on dry land. My mom captured videos of my hilarious leg dance. Laughter is always my best medicine. After my third visit, I crutched myself into his office versus my normal route of being wheeled in. This was the first sign of ANY progress I had seen in an entire year!

On my eighth visit, I crutch into the waiting room, and sit down.

“Paige, you can come on back,” the medical assistant says with a smile. They are, and always have been, so kind to me here. My hands instinctively reach out toward my crutches, but I pull back. I can do this. I hand my crutches to my mom.

“Are you sure?” she asks, hesitantly. I nod. I grab hold of the wooden arm rests on the chair with my shaky hands and push myself up. And then, it happens. One shaky foot in front of the other, I walk myself into his office.

Look, ma, no hands!

After my miracle, I began to get my life back, one shaky footstep at a time. Dr. Judd continued to do research on my behalf. I knew he cared because he never, ever gave up on me. He believed me. He saw my pain. That was all the validation I needed. I received E-Stim therapy weekly. During one of my sessions, he asked me if I had seen the documentary *Living Proof* on Amazon Prime. I shook my head no, and he continued. “It’s about a man named Mathew Embry. He was diagnosed with MS over twenty years ago. He was told he would be in a wheelchair within six months. He and his father refused to accept that answer. They researched his disease themselves, and he’s been living symptom and medication-free ever since. He’s cured himself with intense diet change, vitamins, and exercise. The wheelchair never got him. He even runs marathons!”

I nodded along as he spoke. I’ve heard countless success stories like this. And to be honest, they always make me feel worse because it’s not me running those marathons. The wheelchair got me. It’s not me driving my daughter to school every day, listening to her sing. I am not the person people are looking at, thinking, “But she doesn’t look sick.” It’s etched on the bones sticking out of my face from lack of nutrition and sunlight.

Yes, I was walking again, but the pain was still screaming at me daily. Forget running marathons, I craved a simple day of walking the dogs with my husband and daughter, the warmth of the hot sun on my face. I couldn't handle the sun anymore. It stole my breath—not in a good way. After my session, I told him I would watch the documentary before I came back the following week.

“What have you got to lose?”

Nothing. I've lost it all.

I went home and watched. As the final credits rolled up the screen, I picked my jaw up off the floor and wiped my tears. He had a firm diagnosis, with lesions trailing up and down his spine. He had the prison sentence of the chair waiting for him...but he ran the other way. For the first time in a year, I was inspired. If Mathew, riddled with spinal lesions, could do it, then certainly I—with one or possibly two lesions—could do it...right?

I shuffled into my next appointment with Dr. Judd, notes in hand. He was elated to see my hope had returned, this time with wings. Mathew Embry created a webpage called *MShope.com* for people newly diagnosed with MS. He offers advice, success stories, AND a free cookbook. When you've flushed thousands of dollars down the toilet attempting to heal yourself from a chronic illness, the word “free” is like finding a golden ticket, wrapped around a simple bar of chocolate, opening a world of pure imagination. And I was here for it! I reached out once to Mathew on Instagram for advice about clogged jugular veins, a common symptom he uncovered in his documentary that plagues many people with MS. He responded promptly and was very kind and helpful. Someone else cared.

At this point, I decided to ditch the western medicine route I had been trudging tiredly down for so long and give the holistic approach the old college try. I spoke with my neurologist about quitting Gilenya. He was supportive of my goal but made me promise to undergo an MRI first to ensure the lesions were doing as they were told. They were. The funny, and not so funny, thing about Gilenya is the warning about quitting. The pamphlet cautions that if a patient decides to stop taking Gilenya, their risk of developing new lesions becomes 75% higher within the first three months. This terrifying warning kept me tied to the medication much longer than I would like to admit. Gilenya was only meant to stop more lesions from forming, not to reduce any that were already there. After ingesting it for six months, I felt worse. It took me another six months to

gather my bravery and take the giant leap off the cliff. I took one final look at the pamphlet as I was disposing of my Gilenya literature, and saw in fine print, the last warning:

“May make multiple sclerosis symptoms worse.”

I threw it in the trash, and never looked back.

After I made the leap, the universe began falling into perfect placement. I met a lady who had been plagued with Lyme disease. The symptoms forced her into her bed full-time, as well. The western medical system had failed her, just as it had me. While researching the holistic route, she came across a woman who owned a holistic nutritional consulting company. Within one year of seeing her, my friend with Lyme disease was symptom-free and bed-free. I scheduled with her immediately.

During my first appointment, she strapped her biofeedback machine around my head and extremities, placed a circular red-light directly over my forehead (which I now know is a low-wavelength red light, used to help inflammation and pain), and began explaining her line of work. The biofeedback came back with mind-blowing results. She was able to tell me what my body was lacking so in depth, it made a blood allergy test look like child’s play. I knew she was the real deal when she asked me if I had been in close contact with a pig recently. Apparently, my toxin level in that area was shockingly high, but she had no way of knowing that my sister has a pet pig that lives indoors. I was officially intrigued.

On the Low FODMAP diet, you are allowed to consume dairy if it’s declared lactose-free. The biofeedback results showed that I was having severe reactions to dairy, corn, soy, red meat—all of the ingredients I had been consuming daily for years on my doctor-suggested diet. She also informed me of the vitamins, minerals, and supplements my body was lacking. I learned about the benefits of red-light therapy and how it is more effective on my inflammation pain than a narcotic. It also helps immensely with mood and brain fog. Another technique she used was Bemer Therapy, which increases blood circulation, mobilizes the immune system, improves energy, and decreases inflammation. She gave me a list of vitamins and minerals to start taking immediately and scheduled me for my next visit. And...sent me home with a free cookbook. Score!

Two days after removing all dairy products (and byproducts) from my diet, my skin pain vanished. The pain that felt like a thousand little needles attacking my dermis every second of every day, the pain that no medication could take the edge off, had been thrown out with the dairy.

It's working. I'm not broken.

I took the vitamins and minerals suggested by my nutritionist religiously. After every appointment, the levels of toxicity in my body were down, along with my pain, while my nutrient levels were up. I bought my own red-light box for my face (Bestqool), a panel for my body (Mito Red), and began exposing my brain and body to red-light therapy for fifteen minutes a day. The results were unmatched. I was finally able to step into my life again. The gut-wrenching intestinal pain faded into the background. The true miracle—my brain peaked its head out of the fog. I started driving again. I tried yoga, and my muscles thanked me instead of screaming. Music and reading danced back into my life. My daughter's magical laughter brought joy to my ears instead of pain bombs. I was healing from the inside out. I was becoming a success story. The pain still existed, along with the fog, but it was manageable. It was in the background this time, not me.

One area I was still struggling to find my footing was on the mountain of mood swings and depression I was climbing that were untreatable with SSRIs. I was becoming happier, but that emptiness lingered. It didn't make sense how my life could be returning to me so beautifully, while my mental health was suffocating. I was doing everything suggested to me—exercise, meditation, my diet was on point, surrounding myself with positive things—still, the sadness came. I felt like MS had come into my brain and stolen my pause button. You know, the pause you experience before you react? The pause that blesses you with time to decide if you want to get mad or let it go? My pause was gone. There was no time between feeling and action, and my family was receiving the brunt of it. After an intense meditation session, the strongest urge to get online and do a little more research crept up on me. After minutes of researching SSRI resistant depression, something called ketamine therapy popped up.

Ketamine? The horse tranquilizer?

I'd heard of people using it recreationally when I was younger. I also knew someone with a severe chronic pain illness who would fly to Stanford University hospital every few months to receive ketamine

infusions for her pain management. That's where my knowledge of ketamine ended. As I sat reading about it, I heard Dr. Judd's voice whisper in my head, "What have you got to lose?"

Nothing. I dove headfirst.

After an induction reset round of ketamine intramuscular injection therapy (consisting of six appointments, spread over three weeks), I felt the darkness begin to lift. Several booster sessions later (you can return every three weeks), my pause returned. An added bonus—it also helps with chronic pain and resetting the pain receptors in the brain. It's a journey, but it worked! I went every six-to-eight weeks for over a year, and the results have been life-changing. The first time I noticed it truly working was the day I found a note from my seven-year-old daughter on my nightstand, reading, "You are a really fun mommy when you are happy. I love to be with you." Those two sentences gave me the validation to keep going, to keep pushing, to keep trying, to keep falling, and to never give up because I am a fun mommy when I'm happy. I love to be with me, too—I deserve to be happy.

I didn't realize until a few years after that initial emergency room visit the importance of the words "we found" to a patient with an invisible disease. So often we are left in the dark, being told repeatedly that it's not real or we're making it up. It's this feeling of desperation that led me to beg my neurologist for medication—a very harmful medication I did not need. Thankfully, I took it for only a year before an actual solution found me. Through a strict diet that is tailored to my body to keep me away from inflammatory foods (gluten, garlic, onion, dairy, corn, oats, soy, broccoli, cauliflower, red meat—to name a few), I keep my digestive system flowing naturally. I never cheat on my diet; the consequences are too substantial. Sometimes, I unknowingly consume something I shouldn't, and I feel the consequence within minutes. The company Seed makes a great probiotic+prebiotic supplement called DS-01© Daily Synbiotic that I take morning and night, which also helps with my intestinal pain and digestion. Omega-3 by Nordic Naturals plays a huge roll in keeping my intestines happy, as well.

I now know food is truly medicine. I eat triple the amount of green vegetables I did in my previous life. SUJA green juice is a staple in my refrigerator. Consuming vitamin D daily has also proven vital to my health. During a minor flare-up of symptoms while editing this book, Agota, the publisher, kindly informed me that vitamin D cannot be properly absorbed in the body without K2. I did some research and came

across a well-reviewed brand called Bronson and immediately ordered their D3+K2. I have noticed a difference in my energy since making the switch. The flare-up I experienced was my own fault. I wasn't taking care of my stress management, and it pummeled me. Function and feeling comes and goes throughout my extremities when I'm experiencing a stress flare. Thankfully, the universe sent me only warnings. I spent a week in my house, red-lighting and meditating—doing anything I could think of to heal (and taking every suggestion). I emerged symptom-free two weeks later.

When I first began this journey, I was taking all sorts of vitamins and supplements (recommended to me by my holistic nutritionist) to lower the toxicity levels in my body. Now that they've balanced out, I've been able to scale back to only a few. I take digestive enzymes three times daily (Digest Gold by Enzymedica), along with a fermented women's multivitamin twice daily (CodeAge). I start my day with DS-01© (Seed), followed by a warm mug of lemon water. When I'm finished, I take methyl B12 (Jarrow) and magnesium malate chewable (Seeking Health). I prefer to take my Omega-3 in the evening. I like to wake up much earlier than the rest of my family, so I can complete my routine quietly in the dark before the stimulation of the day begins. It also helps cultivate a positive mindset and set my daily intentions, enabling me to be the wife and mother I aspire to be for my family. After my vitamins, I do fifteen minutes of red-light therapy while listening to self-hypnosis meditations. I've tried several apps, and I've settled on one I really enjoy called *Breathe*.

During one of my meditations, I came to the realization that I needed to eliminate unnecessary stressors from my life (like caffeine) over which I had control. Apparently, my nervous system is hypersensitive to any type of stimulant. Once removed, I noticed my strength returning, my energy-levels rising, and my stress-level reducing. I am so grateful I was given that warning; it's something I don't take lightly. I now have a schedule set for my workday to keep me up and moving hourly. My sweet husband suggested setting an alarm every fifty minutes while I'm working at my computer. The purpose is to prompt me to take a break, stretch, enjoy a song, or engage in something that brings me joy (unrelated to work) for about ten minutes. After that, I return to my computer. I highly recommend giving this approach a try; your body and mind will thank you. I emphasize the idea of finding joy because I've recently grasped the significance of genuine joy in my own life. This entails activities that you enjoy doing without a specific end goal—activities that transcend daily routines. Your soul thrives on joy. I owe

this valuable insight to Glennon Doyle's podcast *We Can Do Hard Things*; another life-changing tool for me.

Through daily exercise of light stretching, yoga, and walking, my muscles have regained their strength. My bed is now a place I sleep at night, compared to the prison it was before. I've collected a remarkable team of physicians who actually listen and care about me as a human being. They don't waste time on the basics. I tell them what I need, and they help me. Always. I see my more recent PT, Dr. Luke Harmon, on a regular basis for dry needling and adjustments to keep my muscles mobile and my ribs in place. They like to wander off sometimes. He is truly phenomenal, and the doctor-patient relationship of trust we've established is incredibly encouraging for my healing journey. When the MS hug found me, I found the kindest pelvic floor physical therapist, Katherine Koch. I see her regularly to keep my breathing muscles in check through dry needling and trigger point massage. What makes these two medical professionals different, and of course, Dr. Judd, as well, is that they truly see and care about ME. And they have never given up on me. I feel incredibly blessed to have crossed paths with all of them.

I am happy to announce that I am back in the editing game, helping people share their stories while preserving their unique voices. This is a genuine passion of mine and one that I do not take lightly. Everyone has a story inside them, and I'm here to illuminate those narratives. You can reach me at www.paigenewsome.com.

I've learned things through this journey that are imperative to my health that I was blind to before. For example, when it comes to my body, I'm the professional. When it's speaking to me, or sending intuitive feelings, I need to listen and speak up. I thank my body daily during morning meditation for allowing me to move, to stretch, to speak, to dance—to be free. I still get brain fog, I still experience pain, but it no longer controls me. I am the conductor on this train, not multiple sclerosis. I also surround myself with people who, even though they may not understand, validate my journey, walking alongside me. As helpful as western medicine can be, it did not help me. I now choose my doctors very wisely; they don't choose me. I keep the ones who show me they care and discard the rest.

To them, I am just a number.
But to me, I'm everything.
I'm worth it...and so are you.

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.