

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.

CONTENTS

Disclaimer

1	Agota N. - Diagnosed in 2019	1
2	Paige N. - Diagnosed in 2019	28
3	Katy - Diagnosed in 2020	44
4	Angie G. - Diagnosed in 2004	56
5	Elisa F. - Diagnosed in 2011	65
6	Kelly G. - Diagnosed in 2015	81
7	Bob C. - Diagnosed in 1999	89
8	Nassira - Diagnosed in 2018	100
9	Biljana - Diagnosed in 2013	107
10	Mohammed - Diagnosed in 2018	112
11	Kathryn - Diagnosed in 2018	117
12	Claudie - Diagnosed in 1996	120
13	Laila - Diagnosed in 2010	129
14	Adria H. - Diagnosed in 2020	133
15	Mara R. - Diagnosed in 2004	159
16	Kelly K. - Diagnosed in 2015	164
17	Michelle - Diagnosed in 1996	182
18	Joanne M. - Diagnosed in 2009	190
19	Helena K. - Diagnosed in 2000	205
20	Sam P. - Diagnosed in 2015	212

21	Alicia - Diagnosed in 2018	230
22	Dawnmarie D. - Diagnosed in 2012	240
23	Clare M. - Diagnosed in 2019	243
24	Sofia C. - Diagnosed in 2013	250
25	Andrea - Diagnosed in 2000	257
26	Meryl H. - Diagnosed in 1999	268
27	Conor K. - Diagnosed in 2003	274
28	Parmjit K. - Diagnosed in 2008	286
29	Kadesha R. - Diagnosed in 2012	298
30	Melody W. - Diagnosed in 2013	306
31	Lieza - Diagnosed in 2016	312
32	Jasmin D. - Diagnosed in 2008	321
33	Megan L. - Diagnosed in 2007	325
34	Gabriel - Diagnosed in 2018	339
35	Talia - Diagnosed in 2016	348
36	Alice S. - Diagnosed in 2007	357
37	Maria I. - Diagnosed in 2012	373

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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1

Story by

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My journey started long before I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) in 2019. Looking back, it all began around 2008 when I was in a very stressful relationship, and I wasn't taking care of my mental and physical health. In 2013, my dad passed away suddenly. I kept my pain to myself while living 9,000 miles away from my family.

Before I continue sharing my story, let me ask you something: If we can make autoimmune disease symptoms better by changing our lifestyles and diets, why do we get these diseases in the first place? Could it be connected to our society, how we live, how we think, what we eat, and even the air we breathe? I really believe so. Instead of just trying to treat these diseases, why don't we focus more on preventing them from happening in the first place? Maybe when I share my honest story, it will help you see things from a different perspective.

Originally, this book was not meant to be my “autobiography”. However, I don’t think I will be publishing another book anytime soon, so I decided to write down my entire story, at least what I think is relevant for this chapter. My life from the beginning – where it started, and where it’s going.

What I understand now is that my MS diagnosis wasn't a coincidence. It didn't happen because it runs in my family, nor was it something I was born with. Instead, I’m personally responsible for “opening the gate” and allowing MS to enter my life through my choices and decisions over the years. I know that this might not be the case for others, but this is my story. There’s so much to share. Let’s get started...

During my meditation sessions these days, I find myself on a large field, covered with flowers as I walk toward an old, rustic house. Even though it’s spring, the sun warms my skin. The sky above is soothing blue, and the scent of freshly cut grass fills the air, bringing back cherished memories of my childhood home. Do I miss that place? Yes! Do I want to live there? Maybe, but not anytime soon. For now, my heart resides in New York, where I’ve been for the past eighteen years. It’s where I have my family, my husband, and our two beautiful babies.

When you are twenty-one, you don’t think much of the future, you think of the “now”. You are wild and selfish. I know I was. Nothing scared me. When I wanted something, I went after it. My mother often wonders where I got this adventurous spirit from. She still can’t believe that her only daughter packed up her luggage and decided to move to a different continent because she wanted a “better life”. (I put “better life” in quotations because since then, I have reevaluated the meaning of these two words.) Did I accomplish it? In some ways, yes; in others, no. I managed to achieve my dreams and desires – married the love of my life, moved to my favorite Upper East Side neighborhood in Manhattan, explored numerous Caribbean islands, and beyond. Life was wonderful...until it wasn’t.

Having a passion is something we should all strive for. In my case, it took many years to discover. When it comes to accomplishing things in life, I often refer to myself as a “late bloomer”. However, I find comfort through telling myself that it’s not entirely my fault. I was born in a small village in the heart of Transylvania, Romania, known as Csíkdánfalva. The era of communism came to an end when I was just five years old. During that period, I distinctly recall my parents acquiring a substantial rectangular box that they referred to as a television. The screen displayed

black and white and had no remote control. It was still magical with only one channel to watch.

I remember winters being long and cozy. Our family would gather around the fireplace, which was essentially a tiled stove, while everyone else was doing their thing. My great aunt who lived with us was knitting, my mom was sewing up holes in old socks to make them new again, my dad was reading the newspaper, and my brother and I were playing on the floor close to the stove where it was warmer. The scent of pine from the crackling fire would mix with the aroma of our dinner: oven-baked potatoes and homemade yogurt. Potatoes were the cornerstone of our kitchen. We had a love-hate relationship. I loved them for their taste, but I also resented them because we spent most of spring, summer, and fall planting them, weeding them, praying for rain, praying for sun, then harvesting and storing them with the hope of selling most to produce income. This wasn't unique to just us; it was the way of life in our village.

As a young girl trying to make sense of the world around me, toiling in the potato field felt like the ultimate chore. Back then, I didn't know the benefits of vitamin D that we absorbed from the sun, nor the value of the exercise we were unknowingly getting. All I could think of was why I had to do this, and why I couldn't just stay home and read my book – a novel from my village library, filled with stories that took place in a city called Los Angeles. A place that sounded more like a dream than reality. It painted a picture of a world where nobody worked, and everyone was happy. I found myself dreaming of living there, and the hot days on the potato field seemed much shorter. But, of course, I had school to finish and a few more summers to “survive”.

Life used to be pretty slow; the kind of slow that I like these days. But during my youth, I didn't really see it that way. Thinking about my village back then is like a blast from the past, reminding me of those “Blue Zones” you hear about. Those are the spots around the world where people live very long, healthy lives. When I was a kid, everyone in the village had animals – pigs, chickens, cows, sheep, you name it. And horses, too, with those old-school carriages. This is how my grandparents lived, and I'm pretty sure it's part of why they're still alive. They barely left the village and rarely needed to see a doctor – well, until they got older.

Then, my grandpa went and got himself a tractor, and things started changing. These days, it seems like everyone has a car, and you hardly see any horses around. Supermarkets popped up, making it so nobody

needed to raise their own chickens and pigs anymore. I'm sharing this because I believe autoimmunity started with this shift. Back in the day, cancer was this rare thing, and nobody even knew what autoimmune diseases were. Thank goodness my mom still has her little garden. The fresh berries, salads made from crispy greens, juicy tomatoes, fresh carrots, and summer cabbage...I only recently understood what she means when she talks about finding peace there. Me? I'm still struggling sometimes to find that peace. But you know what they say, awareness is the first step to making changes, right?

Moving has always been easy for me. I think it's because I've practiced it since I was twelve. It all started when I moved to my aunt's place in the city during my high school years. That felt like a major upgrade at the time. Fast forward to when I turned eighteen, and I made a big leap from Romania to Budapest, Hungary. Life was good, but three years down the road, I felt the doors for me there closed. Getting my visa sorted or dealing with legal paperwork to stay became a real hassle, even though I had Hungarian roots and fully spoke the language. Hitting wall after wall, I made up my mind: it was time to explore America.

I always wanted something better, not just for myself, but for my family, too. I was convinced that once I moved to the US, I could achieve all of that. Initially, I had my heart set on Los Angeles, but life had other plans, leading me to New York instead – the city that never sleeps. Well, that's exactly what happened to me. I was clocking in twenty-hour workdays and managing only four hours of sleep. When my friend came to visit after five months, he told me I looked ten years older. Truth be told, I felt it, too, but I didn't care. Back in the day, I never had much money, but now, I was finally earning, saving up, and even sending some back home to the family. It was the greatest feeling ever. I was convinced that having more meant a better, happier life. That is, until you experience the loss of your health. When confronted with a lifelong diagnosis that has no cure, suddenly, nothing else seems to matter. I'd taken my health for granted and never really slowed down until I had no choice but to take a step back and reassess everything – how I lived and what I prioritized. The things I wanted no longer meant anything. All I wished for was to get my health back. But let's not jump ahead of things. There's a lot more to my story before we reach this point.

My life living in New York was full of adventures. I moved about seven times – starting in Queens, Astoria, then to Brooklyn. I even lived in Jersey for a few months, and I finally settled in Manhattan. How could I afford this? I couldn't! I was always hustling to make ends meet, and I had a roommate. But I loved every bit of it. I never second-guessed my

choice of moving to this country. Sure, there were moments I wished I could share with my loved ones, like becoming the first in my family to graduate from college on the dean's list, no less in America, without much knowledge of the English language.

Of course, there were lots of heart breaks along the way. There were also times when I felt I couldn't cope with homesickness anymore. Being apart from my family was the most difficult, especially when my mom was diagnosed with cancer. When I was finally able to go home and see her in the hospital while she was receiving chemotherapy, it broke my heart. Despite her difficulty walking, she convinced me that she would be okay. Thanks to my aunt, she changed her diet and supplements, and I think deep down, despite the fear, she believed that she could beat cancer. And she did! Back then, I didn't know anything about the healing power of thoughts or food. Unfortunately, it wasn't a topic that interested me.

Four years later, my father passed away from brain cancer. I was living under an illusion, failing to fully comprehend the gravity of his condition. It wasn't until I received an urgent call from my aunt while I was vacationing in Aruba that reality struck. If I wanted to see my father one last time, I had to go home. I got on the plane and went straight to the hospital where the doctor told my mom and me that there was nothing they could do. The doctor prescribed morphine patches and sent him home. Three days later, my father passed away in his bed, suffering from excruciating pain. I was just one wall away, helpless, listening to the agonizing sounds of a man fighting his last battle. Even though a decade has gone by, my eyes still well up with tears as I write this. I'm still not fully healed from his loss. My brother and I had to be there for my mom, and we stood strong.

There's a reason I'm sharing this. You've probably heard those miraculous stories of people making overnight recoveries from illnesses, leaving doctors scratching their heads. On the other side, there are those heart-wrenching cases where someone's given a mere two-to-four years to live, only to pass away within a week. It's all about how your mind works and what you believe; how you process things and move forward. In my mom's case, she made some significant changes – altered her diet, prayed every single day, and incorporated new supplements. Yet, above all, she genuinely believed all these things were contributing to her healing, and they were. Of course, credit also goes to the doctors, but it was she who did the work.

Now, let's talk about my dad. After his eye surgery, his confidence plummeted, and I don't think he ever really bounced back from that. Changing his mindset was tough, and he just couldn't bring himself to believe that something as simple as a diet change would make a difference or that he had the strength to fight off cancer. Instead of seeking that inner peace or taking control of his own healing, he looked outward for help. And by the time he was ready to make that shift, it was too late. I have this fantastic book recommendation for you, *Cured* by Jeffrey Rediger. I wish I had read it back then.

Another reason I shared these stories is because, at some point in life, we all face trauma that leaves marks. My dad's passing was the biggest trauma of mine. I thought I had moved on, but even years later, I couldn't talk or even think about it. Then, thanks to my husband's suggestion, I finally decided to see a therapist. I needed to forgive myself for not being there for my dad. It took me years to shift my focus from his death to the good memories of him from when I was growing up. Now, he is my guardian angel, always with me and looking out for me.

Just before my dad passed away, I had finally ended a terrible relationship that mentally destroyed me. I had three jobs—one was my new business, and the other two were solely to pay my rent. I was determined to make things better because I was tired of working in restaurants. Being an immigrant, working in restaurants felt like a safe space. Nobody made fun of how I spoke, and people even liked my accent. Restaurant work is tough—long hours on your feet, a crazy schedule, and you have to smile no matter how you feel. It gets really tiring. I was always exhausted.

Once more, I pushed myself too hard and didn't pay attention to the warning signs. I can still remember those times when I'd be dozing off and unable to focus – a can of Red Bull to my left and a slice of one-dollar pizza to my right, fighting with a problem I couldn't solve at 1 AM. By the way, those dollar pizza places in New York City should seriously be banned. That kind of food doesn't belong in our bodies.

It's hard to think about that period of my life because the company I was trying to build didn't make it, and it ended up causing a break between me and my friend. I lost all the money I had saved up, and the feeling of failure hit hard. But I kept reminding myself that success often comes after failure. What matters isn't how many times you fall, but how many times you pick yourself up again. That gave me some comfort.

I really believe that everything in life has a reason behind it. Around this time, I met my husband. I just knew he was the ONE for me; I had this feeling that we were meant to be. It was as if the universe was making it happen. I turned thirty, and there he was – my rescuer. It felt like everything was falling into place. But what I didn't realize was how much I had pushed my body to the limit up until then, and I just kept going...

Being someone who believed sleep was overrated, I shouldn't be surprised that my body eventually crashed. Back then, I felt invincible – strong and blessed with good genes. After all, my grandparents were in their eighties, and my incredible mother had conquered cancer. If I fell sick, it would be a matter of a few days, at most. I genuinely thought my body was unbreakable. And as for a healthy diet? Well, I never had the time to cook or the interest in learning about food (I figured what I knew was sufficient!). To me, the word “diet” just meant shedding pounds – something I struggled with since I was twelve. I wasn't overweight, but like any teenager, I'd compare myself to others and see those extra five-to-ten pounds.

In my mind, “dieting” meant not eating. It was that simple. If you don't put it in, it won't show up, right? Well, turns out I was dead wrong! When I wanted to lose some weight, I just stopped eating. It worked like a charm. I'd shed five-to-ten pounds before each vacation, only to gain back ten-to-fifteen during and after. Yep, Brian and I discovered those all-inclusive places and had a blast. That was my life before MS. Sleep wasn't really a thing I worried about, stress management wasn't even on my radar, and I didn't pay much attention to what I ate. My lifestyle was all about embracing every moment to the fullest, even though I'm not a fan of the term “carpe diem”.

That brings me to the next part of my story: MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS. These two words completely changed everything in my life. Imagine a sunny, warm day at the beach, listening to the waves, sipping a strawberry daiquiri, and trying to decide between Italian or sushi for dinner. Life was amazing. I felt so lucky, dreaming about my destination wedding, holding my fiancé's hand as we waited for the sunset. And it happened, just like a dream. Our destination wedding came true, with a little meltdown on my side – but hey, what bride doesn't feel the pressure, right? Let me remind you that at that time, I had no idea how to manage or deal with stress. Stress was something I believed I shouldn't experience because everything was perfect. The tricky thing about stress is that it can sneak up on you out of nowhere, and if you don't recognize it, it can get out of control. I learned this the hard way a few months later.

But our wedding was a fairytale. We were surrounded by family, friends, and unlimited food and drinks. Love was all around us.

For our honeymoon, Greece seemed like the perfect choice. It's also a great spot to drink all day and night – that's exactly what we did! Except for a little hiccup in Santorini, where I had my first experience with anxiety. However, that was overshadowed by Brian's fear after being at the World Trade Center when the towers collapsed. His anxiety had a clear cause, so I understood it. As for mine, I brushed it aside. After all, being afraid of heights isn't a big deal, right? Many of us have that fear, but I'd never felt something like this before. I should have paid more attention.

This feeling was similar to what I would experience during a miscarriage a few months later. I remember telling myself that maybe I wasn't quite ready for a baby, and perhaps the doctors were right in saying that it's something common, almost "normal". Many women start their pregnancy journey with a miscarriage. Looking back, I can't even recall how many pills were prescribed to me, but eventually, I had a procedure to end the pregnancy. The following months were a blur. Again, I was blaming myself for what happened, and my body for failing me. Due to the amount of stress and anxiety this brought me, I finally took my husband's advice to see a therapist. He wanted me to see one anyway because of my dad. I knew something was wrong but didn't know what or how to fix it. I understood that relying on alcohol and painkillers wasn't the solution. You know the saying: "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger"? Well, I came to realize it's not always true. That fifth drink at the end of the night doesn't make you stronger, nor do the toxins in your food or the toxic relationships you're in. Even staying up all night doesn't make you stronger - I'm speaking from my own experience here.

It was early 2019, and Brian decided to surprise me with a ski trip to lift my mood. New York was freezing, so we picked an even colder but more exciting spot: Vail, Colorado. It's a stunning place, with a high altitude that didn't bother me at first. A few days into our trip, we went snowmobiling. It was fun, but my anxiety started to kick in. The night we got back to New York, my forehead felt like it was on fire, but I shrugged it off as the start of a cold. I took some Nyquil and went to bed. Reading this now, I just shake my head. Nowadays, if I have a headache, I grab turmeric or electrolytes, along with two glasses of water. When I catch a cold, I spend the day sipping honey-infused tea. Things have certainly changed since then.

The next day arrived, and I realized I couldn't hear a thing in my left ear. By now, my face was also tingling. Initially, I figured it was probably a side effect of the high altitude and the flight. But something just didn't feel right, so I decided to schedule an appointment with my primary care doctor. She immediately sent me to an ear specialist, but they didn't find anything unusual either. I'd seen two doctors by this point, and both were telling me that everything seemed fine, but I didn't feel fine. As I left the specialist's office, I gathered the courage to ask for magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). My dad had passed away from brain cancer, and all my symptoms seemed to be pointing in that direction. Thankfully, the doctor handed me a referral, obliging my request.

I had never had an MRI before, so I wasn't sure what to expect. I brought my headphones, thinking I could listen to my book while I went through it. That hour in the tube felt incredibly long with the loud banging noises and no music or audio to distract me. It made me anxious, but strangely, I wasn't scared. I had this feeling that things would turn out okay. A few days later, my phone rang, and the doctor didn't sound very positive. He said my MRI results were back and suggested I see a neurologist because it could be MS – multiple sclerosis. “Can you spell that out for me?” I asked, wanting to write it down. I had never heard of multiple sclerosis. You can guess what happened when I looked it up online. Everything went downhill from there. My world (or so I thought) seemed to fall apart. The only silver lining I could find was telling myself that it's better than cancer. I might not live as long as I had thought, but at least I would have some time.

The wait for a neurologist's appointment felt like an eternity. Finally, I secured one on March 5th, just five days before my thirty-fifth birthday. And there, in that office, she diagnosed me with multiple sclerosis. It was a brief glance at the computer screen, a few seconds that changed everything. She noted a couple of old, faded lesions and three bright ones responsible for my symptoms. I remember silently hoping for a positive outcome, but there wasn't one. Nothing positive. In that room, my entire life, dreams, and future collapsed. Beside me, Brian held my hand, but I felt like I was floating. Countless questions raced through my mind, but I couldn't find my voice. Brian was asking questions, yet I couldn't hear them. The only thing I recall hearing is that unless I start medication immediately, I could end up in a wheelchair. “What about becoming pregnant?” I finally asked her. She shook her head. Medication had to come first; we could discuss pregnancy six months later, she explained.

The next hour was the slowest hour of my life. I sat with six others in the room, receiving steroid treatments. I tried to hold back tears, but they

flowed despite my efforts. There was a woman beside me, her cheerful and comforting presence felt like a gift from above. She had been diagnosed nine years prior and was there for her monthly Tysabri infusion. That was the same medication the doctor had mentioned. The room was filled with a sense of darkness; I felt I didn't belong there. As I was leaving, they handed me the paperwork to sign up for Tysabri, but I held off. It was a lot to take in, and I needed time to process. I'm thankful I did, as a few days later, my bloodwork results revealed that I was JC virus positive. This meant Tysabri wasn't the right choice for me unless I wanted to risk a brain infection later in life.

I needed another opinion, hoping that maybe the first diagnosis was wrong. The steroids seemed to help, as my hearing had improved by the time I saw the second doctor. Only a slight numbness remained on my face. Unfortunately, he confirmed the initial diagnosis. Interestingly, he suggested a different medication called Ocrevus. He also mentioned Copaxone as an option if I wanted to become pregnant – something I'd have to inject myself with daily. That idea was quickly dismissed; I couldn't imagine doing that even if my life depended on it. Feeling even more lost, I wasn't comfortable with his approach. Moreover, I was curious about other potentially “perfect” medications for me, so I decided to schedule an appointment with a third doctor.

Between the span of those two appointments, I received the results of the MRI of my spine – no lesions. Finally, something positive! I remember leaving the radiology department and seeing a sign on the street that said, “Beating Cancer”. I took it as a sign. I was determined to beat multiple sclerosis, or whatever was trying to take over my life. I didn't have all the answers yet, but I knew this was my new mission. On that day, I created my Instagram account @beatingmys and came across Dr. Wahls's book on Amazon. If you're going to read just one book about MS, this is the one you need!

After ordering the book, I changed my mind and decided to listen to the audio version instead. I couldn't wait for the physical book to arrive. I wanted to learn more from her, to understand how she regained her health and left behind the wheelchair, so that maybe I could prevent myself from getting in one. In just a few chapters, I came to recognize how unhealthy my lifestyle had been in recent years, and how it might have contributed to my symptoms and diagnosis.

Later that year, during my visit with the third doctor, I was already three months pregnant and had completely changed my diet. This doctor was more understanding and didn't push medication. He congratulated me on

my pregnancy, wished me luck, and told me to come back after giving birth. When I mentioned Dr. Wahls, he didn't seem fully on board but didn't say much. I think he realized that trying to sway my decision was probably pointless. He's still my neurologist, even though I haven't seen him in two years.

I soon learned that MS varies from person to person. It varies in how it feels, the symptoms it brings, and how it manifests. If not managed, it can spiral. The first few weeks after receiving the diagnosis was the hardest period to get through. Trying to understand the disease, unravel how it uniquely affects you, comparing your journey to others', and facing the uncertainty of the future. None of us really knows what lies ahead, but seeing someone in a wheelchair and realizing that could be you brings a new kind of fear that you never knew existed.

My research started at the doctor's office, where I gathered brochures and learned about upcoming MS events in Manhattan. Suddenly, I was part of a new community – the “MS Community” – where everyone is friendly, yet no one really wants to belong. The first and only event I attended was quite overwhelming. It was sponsored by drug companies, and the pressure was tangible. By then, I had memorized the names and side effects of each drug. But don't ask me to recall them—that information is tucked away in a corner of my brain I rarely visit. I need my brain for more important tasks! Anyway, the event was depressing. The message was that medication or a cure were the only sources of hope.

“Cure” is an intriguing word in the autoimmune world. You see, all autoimmune diseases share two commonalities: The underlying cause remains mysterious, and the immune system goes awry, targeting its own cells. As a result, a range of symptoms arises, with some individuals experiencing more severe symptoms, while others may have none at all. Why? It's often tied to the amount of inflammation present in the body. In cases of autoimmune diseases, the immune system, designed to shield the body from invaders like bacteria and viruses, mistakenly attacks its own healthy cells and tissues. In my opinion, if we strengthen our immune systems and diminish inflammation, we might uncover the “cure” within. More on this later.

At first, I wasn't sure about taking the holistic route. Like “autoimmune disease”, “holistic” was also a new term for me, but I knew the diet change was a must. While listening to *The Wahls Protocol*, I took notes. I made two lists: one for “good” foods and another for foods to avoid (the “bad” ones). The list of things to avoid seemed endless: pasta, pizza,

artificial sweeteners, sausages, ketchup, bread, fried foods, alcohol, milk, cheese, hot dogs, ice cream, potatoes – all the foods I loved and ate. It felt like my world was crashing down. I later discovered many alternatives to replace these foods in my diet. And yes, I still enjoy potatoes – yellow and organic when possible!

During that time, I got invited to a baby shower. I left the event early, tears filling my eyes. It wasn't just because I could only find one thing to eat out of the numerous dishes beautifully laid out on the buffet (a salad with dressing), it was more about the sudden feeling of being “different”. I didn't know where I belonged anymore. Explaining why I was walking around with an empty plate, looking at food became hard. My brain was frozen, and I felt all alone. But deep down, I knew I wasn't alone, and this gave me some comfort.

In a few months, I turned into one of those people in restaurants who asks a lot of questions about the menu, wants substitutions, and claims to have gluten and dairy allergies. I used to smile when I saw others ordering like this. Now, I was the one doing it. It felt a bit awkward at first, but I quickly got used to it as I started feeling the results from eating healthier. The brain-fog lifted, my anxiety got better, and my mood improved. So, if you're reading this, don't hesitate to speak up in restaurants! Maybe if we do it together, we can encourage them to offer more healthy options on their menus. We can't change the whole system on our own; we need a collective effort.

On March 16th, just eleven days after my diagnosis, I shared this on my Instagram, “I feel angry. But I also feel motivated to do everything I can to #beatms...”. I don't feel angry anymore. I feel thankful that I was diagnosed when I was, right before starting a family. This diagnosis led me to discover more about health – how to be healthy and keep my loved ones healthy. That same year, I gave birth to my son on Christmas Day. It was a wonderful pregnancy, and easy delivery.

MS taught me valuable lessons: the significance of family and to appreciate and enjoy each day. It also taught me to listen to my body and take care of myself, so I can take care of others. While I questioned every symptom during pregnancy, I felt great. I later realized most symptoms were pregnancy-related, not MS-related. Now, I see symptoms as signals from my body, guiding me to slow down, eat well, avoid certain foods, and rest. I've become adept at listening and responding to these cues. Paying attention to my brain is a different story; that's much harder.

Before MS, I might have chosen formula over breastfeeding for many silly reasons. After reading the book *The Vaccine-Friendly Plan* by Paul Thomas and talking to my neurologist, my decision changed. When the time came, I was panicking because I couldn't "exclusively" nurse and needed to substitute with formula. I kept thinking about what the neurologist had said: "Exclusive breastfeeding prevents relapses." It was a challenging time. Looking back, I now see that stress and inexperience played a part. It's strange how I had prepared so much, yet brain fog hit when I needed clarity most. Brain fog led to frustration, which turned to anger, and then fear. I've traveled this road before, not knowing why or what's happening. Now I understand, but it's tough to navigate in the moment of confusion.

I waited for that relapse, questioning everything that was happening in my body. I struggled to sleep and find time to eat. Strangely, the relapse never occurred, though I experienced six months of numbness in my left leg, possibly from the epidural. My only other symptom during postpartum was eye twitching, lasting a few weeks. I'm unsure if it was a flare or my body was going through detox.

During my first pregnancy, I became really sensitive to smells, so I started using essential oils. Now, I keep the humidifier running day and night. My favorite oils to use include lavender, lemon, eucalyptus, peppermint, wild orange, On Guard (by doTERRA), and grapefruit. Once I learned about the harmful ingredients in our household and beauty products, I decided to make my own to avoid toxins and save money. The recipes are easy, and nothing is more effective than vinegar for cleaning. For an all-purpose cleaner, I mix 1/4 cup of vinegar, 2 cups of water, and 20 drops of peppermint oil. For the bathroom, I combine 3/4 cup water, 1/4 cup vinegar, 1 tablespoon of soap, and 20 drops of grapefruit essential oil in a large bottle. I even make my own eye makeup remover, using 2 tablespoons of witch hazel, 2 tablespoons of coconut oil, 2 tablespoons of distilled water, and 2 drops of tea tree oil. I also use an app called Think Dirty to rate all my beauty products. Yes, it takes time to implement everything, but it's so worth it.

My Instagram account truly made a difference in my life. It kept me on track and motivated me since the beginning. At first, I had questions, and then, I started receiving them from others. One question that sticks out the most is, "Where should I start when changing my diet?" For me the easiest way to start was in my pantry. I knew that if I didn't have certain foods at home, I wouldn't be tempted to eat them. I was fully committed.

I spent about five hours sorting through my kitchen cabinets. I had a simple rule: anything that contained gluten or dairy had to go. By the time I was done, I had five bags of food to donate, and I had emptied out many shelves. My goal was to eliminate gluten, dairy, refined sugar, and soy from my diet. Additionally, I wanted to minimize processed foods and increase my intake of vegetables, fruits, meat, and fish. At that time, I didn't know much about reading nutrition labels. When I went grocery shopping, I mostly paid attention to the front of the packaging, which often featured appealing marketing claims, like "fat-free," "low-fat," "zero calories," and "all-natural". I fell for those labels every time. It was easier to just trust the system, meaning that if a product was on the shelf, approved by the Food and Drug Administration, it must be safe.

After watching the Netflix documentary *Fed Up*, I realized it was time to make better choices. I decided to dig deeper and started learning about food labels. To keep it simple, these days I focus on one thing on the label: the ingredient list. If the list is long, I put it back on the shelf. If it's short (less than eight items) and I recognize all of them, then I'm willing to give the product a try. The first ingredient listed is the one that the product contains the most of. For example, if the ingredients are dates, mango, almonds, and chia seeds, then the product has more dates than mango. While all these ingredients are healthy, finding such products isn't easy. That's why you need to become a bit of a detective when grocery shopping. It's challenging and time-consuming, but it's necessary. I highly recommend following @thefoodbabe on Instagram. She shares fantastic tips on healthy options. If you're in the United States, I also suggest downloading the Bobby Approved app. You can use it to scan items in certain supermarkets, like Costco, Trader Joe's, Whole Foods, and ShopRite. The app will tell you which ingredients to avoid and why. The list of ingredients can be long and confusing. You don't have to memorize all the names, but you should be aware of how many different things are in your food that your gut can't process. In the U.S. alone, around 3,000 new "ingredients" are approved each year. These chemicals aren't tested on humans, and we don't know how they'll affect our bodies. What we do know is that the number of people being diagnosed with autoimmune diseases is steadily increasing.

Until you become familiar with what's truly healthy and what's not, the simplest way to transition your diet is by incorporating more vegetables. This could mean adding an extra serving of broccoli or enjoying a blend of root vegetables or cauliflower rice. I'd also suggest refraining from purchasing your go-to snacks. This helps you gain better control over your cravings, and you won't have tempting chips staring at you all day long. In my case, I took a more drastic approach and completely emptied

out my pantry. However, this left me with limited food choices, which can be quite discouraging.

If you've seen the documentary mentioned above, you might be wondering about the types of sugar you can consume or how to eliminate sugar from your diet altogether. Sugar is widespread and can be found in various foods (even in items like bread, processed foods, and salad dressings). The more sugar you consume, the more your body craves it. Cutting down on sugar was a challenge for me in the beginning. It took about two weeks to gradually reduce my cravings. During that period, I opted for natural sources of sweetness, like dates, figs, bananas, raspberries with almond butter, and 90% dark chocolate. These options are not only nutritious but also offer a natural sweetness. I replaced artificial sweeteners with healthier alternatives, such as honey, maple syrup, stevia, and coconut sugar. While not all sugars are harmful, I've chosen to eliminate refined sugar from my diet entirely.

What I found fascinating is that the food we consume has a direct influence on the physical structure and well-being of our brains. The fats, carbohydrates, and proteins we incorporate into our diet serve as the fundamental building blocks that nourish our brain's health. Moreover, micronutrients like vitamins (such as B12) and minerals (like magnesium) also play essential roles in supporting our brain's functionality. The connection between our diet and our brain's performance is robust. Another thing to consider is the close correlation between gut health and brain health – they maintain ongoing communication. Opting for organic whole foods whenever possible and avoiding pesticides and herbicides can greatly contribute to a healthy gut microbiome. Making small adjustments to our diet, even during grocery shopping, can have a profound impact on both our general health and brain health. Ultimately, it all begins with the choices we consciously make. Things started to change when I embraced this power and began to make thoughtful decisions.

By this time, I had listened to numerous books about autoimmune diseases and had discovered many references to functional medicine and how it can help in understanding and addressing the root causes of my condition. Again, I asked my Instagram followers and soon, someone recommended Parsley Health (www.parsleyhealth.com). Although my insurance didn't provide full coverage for them, it did cover the bloodwork, which was huge, so I decided to enroll in their program. Holistic practitioners emphasize that the foundation of both healing and illness begins in the gut. A healthy digestive system and robust microbiome are two of the most important factors for sustaining overall

wellness. We're all familiar with the saying, "You are what you eat." It's true. The microorganisms within our gut serve various critical roles, including regulating our immune, metabolic, and nervous systems. The microbiome continues to change due to an array of factors, such as our environment, diet, social interactions, medication use, chemical exposure, and more.

When I first went to Parsley's office in Midtown Manhattan, I knew I'd found the right place. Dr. McConnell made me feel valued, listened to my story, and asked questions that my previous doctors hadn't. We talked about my diet, lifestyle, and I mentioned my pregnancy. Unfortunately, due to my pregnancy, we couldn't delve deeply into extensive testing (as hormonal levels could alter the results). What stood out the most from my bloodwork was the hsCRP level, which is the inflammation marker in the body. The normal range is 1.0-3.0, but mine was high at 12.2 H in September 2019. By April 2020, it dropped to 5.2, and in my most recent bloodwork in February 2023, it reached a much better level at 2.0. However, it's important to note that this is just one piece of the puzzle. I wish it were that simple.

I was also curious about my vitamin D level. We all know how important it is to take vitamin D with K2 (K2 helps absorption), right? Well, I didn't. My primary care doctor never checked my vitamin D level. My neurologist did when I was diagnosed, and my level was 23, way below the normal range of 32-100. Did you know that vitamin D is actually a hormone? And that during the COVID-19 pandemic, those with higher vitamin D levels recovered faster and had fewer symptoms? There are many articles that discuss this. Now, my level is above 80. You can find my interview with Dr. Wahls about this on my YouTube channel. I had the amazing opportunity to interview her twice this year!

From my perspective, diagnoses can simplify treatment and medication for doctors. For me, it was about digging deeper to find the root cause and prevent future relapses. A friend pointed me to her acupuncturist, Lida Ahmady, L.Ac. at De'Qi Health in Soho, Manhattan. Our first appointment was two hours long; this was the second time I felt heard. She knew right away what I needed. Even though I'm afraid of needles, my weekly appointments were something that I looked forward to for eight months during my first pregnancy. Every time I left her practice, I felt "healed" in a sense. Sadly, I stopped seeing her because of COVID and relocating, but I still take the magnesium citrate she recommended. It solved the mystery surrounding my lifelong battle with constipation.

My second pregnancy also went smoothly. Lily, my beautiful daughter, was born in October 2021. After going through two pregnancies in three years, I've come to understand why relapses are more likely to happen during postpartum. The challenges of being a mom play a big role. The fatigue from lack of sleep, being exhausted all the time, not having enough time to eat nutritious meals, neglecting our own well-being, and the stress that comes with the unpredictability of motherhood – especially with your first baby. I remember I was constantly worrying. I consider myself fortunate that I had resources to turn to when I needed to overcome those moments of feeling down. I call it my “Emergency List”, and it works most of the time. I'll share my list at the end of my chapter.

Having a baby is the most beautiful thing in the world, but motherhood is not easy. Mental preparation is key; you can't even entertain relapse thoughts. Not everyone experiences a relapse. Remember, our body hears our mind and responds to our thoughts. Positivity and optimism are vital. Your mindset shapes your future. *The Secret* by Rhonda Byrne explains this the best.

In the summer of 2020, right in the midst of COVID, my son Alec had just turned ten months old when I received my training materials from the Dr. Sears Wellness Institute. These marked the start of my journey as a health coach. While I may not actively practice health coaching, the training provided me with valuable insights into nutrition and highlighted the shortcomings of the Standard American Diet (SAD). By this time, I knew that food was medicine, and my body needed a “reset”. The Autoimmune Protocol (AIP) diet seemed like a great choice for this. The diet involves a thirty-day elimination phase, followed by a reintroduction phase. Find more information on autoimmunewellness.com.

To this day, I mainly follow the AIP Protocol. I feel my best when I eat lots of vegetables, fruits, meat, and fish. I do eat gluten-free pasta and cauliflower pizza sometimes, but I stay away from dairy. The only dairy I might add is a little parmesan cheese. I like shopping at thrivemarket.com because I can easily find products based on my dietary needs. This is how I came across various healthy brands, like Siete, Simple Mill, Chomps, Kettle & Fire, Hu, Tolerant, and Bionaturae (just to mention a few).

Over time, I've realized a crucial truth about diet: There's no universal fit. Have you heard of bio-individuality? It's the concept that each person's unique makeup affects how they react to food, nutrients, lifestyle, and environment. This means no single diet or lifestyle works for everyone. Bio-individuality acknowledges our distinct nutritional

needs and responses. What suits one might not suit another due to factors like genetics, metabolism, gut health, age, and lifestyle. We're all unique, and there's no one-size-fits-all approach. Experiment, find what suits you, and listen to your body. That being said, we all should keep in mind that eating whole foods just the way nature intended is best. Processed food that sits on the shelf at a supermarket contains minimal nutritional value and unhealthy additives. When you provide your body with what it needs, it has the ability to heal itself. Count nutrition not calories.

You know what the wonderful thing about eating healthily is? I no longer worry about how my clothes fit. Throughout my life, I tried various methods to lose weight. From extreme diets, like Nutrisystem, to even starving myself just to look good in swimwear. However, none of these approaches worked, and they likely exacerbated my health issues. I thought becoming pregnant meant saying goodbye to my clothes forever, as they'd never fit after. But guess what? I gained just a little weight during both pregnancies and lost it all within a few weeks. Some people say it's because of breastfeeding, but that's not the real reason. Now I eat three times more than before and still haven't gained weight. It's another small thing I can thank MS for. But how many of us struggle with weight gain? A healthy diet change is the solution. I wish I had known this sooner. By eliminating gluten and dairy, reducing refined sugar intake, and incorporating plenty of vegetables and protein into your diet, you can achieve remarkable results, not only in terms of mental well-being but also in terms of your weight. On a side note: I hope this book reaches those dealing with weight problems. I wish I had known back then that a simple paleo diet could have helped me lose weight, stay in shape, and possibly saved my health.

Instead of viewing diet and lifestyle changes as sacrifices or missing out, let's shift our perspective to a more positive one. Consider all the wonderful things you'll gain by making these adjustments. Envision enjoying delicious fruits and veggies that nourish your body and bring you joy. Picture the amazing experiences you'll have while running and feeling energized. It's about adding goodness to your life, not taking it away. Embrace these changes, and you'll set yourself up for a successful, fulfilling journey ahead! I like to keep this quote in mind: "The point is not to live longer but to live better, not just to add more years to your life but to add more life to your years." - Dr. Mark Hyman.

I'm not certain where I first heard this, but it's quite insightful: think of food like an amusement park. It can offer short-term entertainment or long-term nourishment. About 90% of the time, I opt for nourishment because I understand that's what my body needs to thrive and heal. While

I could write an entire book about diet, I've chosen to prioritize a more crucial message in my story: the incredible POWER OF OUR BRAINS, and the profound potential for change and healing that starts in our minds.

For a long time, I believed that diet was at the top of my list for healing. But about a year ago, something clicked when I listened to Dr. Joe Dispenza's book *Becoming Supernatural*. It made me realize I hadn't fully understood the power of the mind. Stress triggered my first relapse, and during stressful times, my body and mind seemed to shut down. We now recognize the importance of our thoughts and beliefs. Meditation has become a powerful tool for managing and reducing stress, bringing clarity and calmness to the mind. To me, meditation is like a form of prayer, offering inner peace. Some of us turn to God, a Higher Spirit, or the Universe for help. Regardless of our belief, practicing meditation is vital for self-love. It took me some time to forgive myself for feeling responsible for my mom's cancer and for not being there during my dad's surgeries. But through meditation, I have found peace and healing.

Just recently, I discovered that in 1872, Dr. Jean-Martin Charcot suggested that MS might result from prolonged grief and vexation. Another study by George L. Engel also found that a majority of patients had experienced psychologically stressful events before the onset of symptoms leading to a multiple sclerosis diagnosis. Dr. Gabor Maté, in his book, *The Myth of Normal*, discusses how stress-induced inflammation, triggered by nervous system discharges, is influenced by emotions. There's ample evidence supporting this connection. MS patients facing significant life stressors appear to be four times more likely to experience disease flare-ups. Stress and trauma worsen MS, which emphasizes the importance of meditation.

If you're looking for a beginner's guide to meditation, I recommend listening to *Stress Less, Accomplish More* by Emily Fletcher or taking the Silva Ultramind System course on www.mindvalley.com. As someone who skeptically dismissed meditation and sat on the couch four years ago, I now dedicate ten-to-twenty minutes of my mornings to practice it. Meditation is the best medication for the brain. I truly believe that if I'd practiced meditation all along, my life's path would have been remarkably different.

As we know, sleep is another important component of healing. I used to stay awake all night or get a maximum of five-to-six hours of sleep. Not anymore! I make sure to be in bed by 10 PM, after I take my magnesium and probiotics. I close my eyes, reflect on three things I'm grateful for,

and peacefully fall asleep. If my mind starts to wander, I practice breathing exercises by Wim Hof (you can find them on YouTube: Wim Hof Method Guided Breathing for Beginners) or meditate for a few minutes. Of course, there are nights when my kids keep me up, but I try to compensate for those lost hours by napping with them the next day or going to bed earlier.

Getting enough sleep plays a significant role in how I feel. During sleep, our bodies have a chance to heal. Put simply, when you eat, your body focuses on digesting food rather than concentrating on healing. Even a small snack here and there can keep your digestive system engaged, diverting the attention of other essential organs. That's why I aim to avoid eating after 8 PM and before 8 AM.

I try to begin my mornings with gentle stretches to connect with myself. After that, I sit next to my red-light machine and meditate for ten-to-fifteen minutes. I'm not sure if it's the machine or the beauty in manifesting, but it helps me start my day with a smile. I try to drink two-to-three glasses of water as soon as I reach the kitchen. When we moved into our house, my only request was to have a reverse osmosis filter for drinking (and cooking) water under my sink. If I have time, I make celery juice or mixed fruit-and-veggie juice with my Omega Juicer. I picked this brand because it's quick to clean. Lily loves both; Alec is still experimenting. For the fruit-and-veggie juice, I add whatever I have in the fridge from this list: carrots, apples, lemon, mint, cucumber, cilantro, beets, pears, kiwi, orange, mango, pineapple, and spinach. Following my morning juice, I've made it a habit to sit down and eat a protein-rich breakfast. I've noticed that this change has led to fewer mood swings during the day compared to before. It turns out that the amino acids in protein play a role in balancing the nervous system. Who would have thought?

Intermittent fasting is huge, and you can learn more about it in other chapters. But for me, it was causing anxiety and mood swings. So, I adjusted my routine. I used to fast from 8 PM to 11 AM. It's easy when you have two young children and a household to run; sometimes you just completely forget to eat. Then, by noon, I would lose it. I literally needed to do breathing exercises to reset my mind and body. Not anymore. Don't get me wrong, intermittent fasting is very important as it gives the body a chance to repair itself. However, it's crucial to remember that everyone is unique, and you should experiment to find what works best for you and when to practice it. While I still fast for fourteen-to-sixteen hours, two days a week for the rest of the week, I opt for a protein-rich breakfast around 9 AM to start my day.

I like to take long walks with Lily in the morning, aiming to catch some sunlight. The sun is a powerful tool to boost mood and increase vitality. I also try to do some exercise in the morning. Why in the morning? Because it helps me sleep better. If I have babysitting help, I run to the gym. If not, I take out my yoga mat and turn on YouTube for yoga practice. Lily loves watching and practicing, which can be a fun distraction. When time is short, I do a quick ten-minute workout. This involves fifty squats (divided into sets of ten and fifteen), with two-minute planks in between, and then finishing with fifty sit-ups.

Cold showers are said to help with blood flow, lessen muscle aches, and boost the immune system. I end my showers with a twenty-to-forty second blast of cold water. I have tried to last as long as I can, but it's not as fun as it looks. Usually, my mood is elevated once I turn off the water. Give it a go and share your experience with me. Turns out, Dr. Wahls does it, too.

When it comes to lunch, I'm a big fan of using leftovers, having salads, or making smoothies. My smoothies aren't all about taste. They're about packing lots of nutrients into my body all at once. There's no strict recipe, but once you make enough smoothies, you'll know what to use and how to make them tasty. Here's a list of the main things we like (my kids are crazy about smoothies): protein powder, collagen powder, coconut milk, and a banana as the base. Then, depending on what I have, I choose five-to-ten items from the following (either frozen or fresh): blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, goji berries, mangos, pineapples, lemon, kiwi, ginger, apples, dates, figs, avocados (any kind of fruit), almond butter, walnuts, chia seeds, flaxseed, spinach, kale, carrots, cooked broccoli, cauliflower, sweet potatoes, and beets. You know the saying, "Eat the rainbow"? This is my way of doing just that. A tip: If you use enough frozen ingredients, you won't need to add ice to your smoothie.

I take my vitamins and supplements after lunch. These include vitamin D, K2, DHA, EPA, B12, magnesium malate, and a multivitamin from Seeking Health. This list and the dosage I take change based on the results of my bloodwork (twice a year) and microbiome test (once a year). In the United States, there are many options for microbiome tests. I used one called Viome, but I recently found another one in Hungary that I prefer. Feel free to reach out if you want to know more about it.

There's growing research connecting autoimmune issues to the health of our gut microbiome. Any imbalances in our gut, particularly leaky gut,

can contribute to symptoms of autoimmune diseases, including multiple sclerosis. Ask your functional medicine doctor about this. The gut is where it all begins. What we put into our bodies reflects how we feel. I see this in action every day.

When it comes to staying hydrated, I aim for six-to-eight glasses of water daily. I focus on drinking more in the earlier part of the day to avoid waking up during the night. By incorporating lemon, sea salt, mint, apple cider vinegar, or electrolytes into my filtered water, I ensure that essential minerals are replenished. During colder months, I enjoy sipping on various teas throughout the day. I get my herbs and spices from herbco.com. I also like to have bone or veggie broth a few times a week and use it when I cook to boost the nutrients. Making my own broth is simple with a slow cooker. Collagen powder and bone broth are known for their potential benefits, including aiding digestion, supporting heart health, preventing bone loss, and increasing muscle mass. Additionally, they promote skin health and can reduce joint pain. Consider adding a spoonful of collagen powder to your bone broth before drinking.

Throughout the week, I try to incorporate one hot bath (with Epsom salt and essential oils) and one ice plunge or cryotherapy session. The first time I tried cryotherapy was right after my MS diagnosis. I'm not entirely sure how I discovered it, but what I learned back then was that cryotherapy causes anti-inflammatory effects for various conditions, including MS, and it did help with my symptoms at that time.

The idea of the ice plunge came from Wim Hof, also known as "The Iceman". He is a Dutch extreme athlete and advocate for cold exposure, breathwork, and meditation techniques. He believes that regular exposure to cold helps activate the body's natural mechanisms, boosts circulation, and has positive effects on the immune system, pain perception, and stress response. The first time I did an ice plunge for two minutes was in my bathtub. Without my husband routing for me by counting down the time, I wouldn't have lasted for more than ten seconds in the icy water. Again, the benefit of this overruled the "pain", just like my daily cold showers.

Cooking starts around 5 PM almost every day. I'm eagerly awaiting the day when the kids are a bit older and can help with cleaning and chopping veggies. The actual cooking part doesn't take much time; it's the preparation that's more time-consuming. I wish I could find four-to-five hours on the weekends for batch-cooking and to cook most of our meals for the week. To simplify things, I made a monthly chart listing all the foods we enjoy eating. This helps me plan meals and know what I

need to buy at the supermarket. Now the entire cooking process, including grocery shopping, is more enjoyable. I love making blended soups and freezing leftovers. Believe it or not, lasagna and pasta dishes are still on the menu—just with gluten-free pasta. For healthiest cooking, I use my air-fryer three-to-four times a week for almost everything, from steak and chicken to meatballs and veggies. It’s hassle-free to clean, and there is no need to “supervise” it. I love teaching Alec and Lily about food. That will be my gift that I know will help them the most throughout life. Alec is already searching for organic labels in the supermarket and scanning items with the Bobby Approved app. My only wish is that schools would focus more on healthy eating. It would prevent so many diseases and give children a healthy start in life.

As I’m close to finishing my chapter, I’m wondering whether I should share my new discovery. As you can see from my story, I’m using myself as a guinea pig before I recommend anything. I would also like to state here, just like we did in the beginning of this book, that none of this information is medical advice. Before you consider trying anything, you should do so at your own risk. But it’s best if you consult your doctor. Have you heard about the book called *The Mood Cure* by Julia Ross? According to the book: “Serotonin deficiency is a factor in many seemingly unrelated psychological and physical symptoms, ranging from panic and irritability to insomnia, PMS, and muscle pain.” Serotonin is made from essential amino acids, and all my symptoms, such as anxiety, mood swings, and sadness, were probably caused by inadequate levels of serotonin. While you can obtain amino acids from food, I found that supplementing with 5HTP, a natural serotonin precursor, was an effective method for improving my mood. I’ll let you explore the book and learn more about this because you might end up trying another natural option to manage stress.

I solely believe that seeing a therapist was one of the reasons that I was able to put my life back on track and move forward so quickly after the diagnosis. These days finding a therapist is easier than you might think. Two sites that I highly recommend checking out are www.helloalma.com and www.headway.co. Your insurance might cover them. Another piece of advice is to begin journaling, as I’ve found keeping a journal to be an invaluable tool. If you’re looking for one that allows you to track your supplements, mood, and diet all in one place, check out the one I created for people with MS. It’s available on Etsy.

It takes time to process a diagnosis like this. There were lots of “why me’s?” What did I do to deserve this? I don’t ask questions like this anymore. Instead, I ask, “What was the purpose for this happening to

me?” It helps so much. With time and a deeper understanding, I realized that my MS diagnosis gave me the purpose I had been searching for all my life. I'd always known I wanted to help others, and now, here I am, publishing a book that I believe will profoundly impact many lives. MS is awful, but there are awful things happening around us all the time. It all depends on our perspectives and how we process things that will ultimately move us forward.

I haven't had any major relapses since my diagnosis. My brain fog is rare. I used to struggle with memory problems and anxiety but “fixed” both. I used to struggle with slurring speech. It was the most annoying and embarrassing thing I have ever experienced. Thankfully, it's no longer present. I only feel fatigued after eating gluten. I did have some leg pain a few months ago that lasted a couple of weeks, but after some cryotherapy sessions, daily workouts, and stretching, the pain disappeared. My latest MRI (last year) showed no new lesions. I was a little surprised because the stress alone from getting an MRI is major, and last year, during 2022, I hit my lowest point during my postpartum. At that time, because of fear of the unknown, I decided to fill out the paperwork for the medication Aubagio. I received my first month's prescription; a year later—it's still sitting in my kitchen cabinet. I couldn't take it; I wasn't ready, and I don't know if I ever will be. Instead, I made a promise to myself that when I get my next MRI in 2025, it will be lesion-free. If you can reverse an autoimmune disease, you can reverse MS, too. Acceptance, being positive, willing to change, and ultimately believing that healing is possible are my secrets. I hate when I hear, “Don't get your hopes up.” Why on earth not? If we have no hope, what else do we have?

Some of my friends are still unaware that I have MS. They don't know the challenges I face, and I understand they might not fully grasp what it means. Even if you just met me, you probably wouldn't guess that I have MS. Sometimes, I find it hard to believe it myself. As odd as it may sound, I feel grateful for the early diagnosis because it's like I got a second chance. It gave me the opportunity to reverse the damage from my twenties and early thirties. My ultimate goal is to live until I'm 120 years old, or even longer, and to keep my family healthy. This wouldn't have been possible if I hadn't uncovered ways to stay energetic and resilient. This brings to mind Dr. Mark Hyman's latest book called *Young Forever*, which I found to be truly insightful and relevant. In life, we must strive to find the positive in every challenging situation. It's essential to focus on the good and continue moving forward. With a positive mindset and determination, we can overcome obstacles and embrace a fulfilling life.

It's time to circle back to the beginning of my story where I discussed how we lived as human beings fifty-plus years ago. There were less cancers, less autoimmune diseases, less supermarkets, less processed foods, and less stress. If we look at the dramatic changes in the food supply over the past twenty years with the huge number of processed foods and artificial substances that infiltrated the food supplies, it's not shocking why our bodies haven't fully adapted. Stressful life adds just more to this mix. Our body's fight or flight response isn't triggered by the lion (or in my case, a bear—since there were plenty where I grew up) chasing us. Instead, it's set off by the onflow of caffeine, pressure, and urgency. There was a time when I believed that if I remained in Transylvania, Romania, my birthplace, I may not have developed an autoimmune disease. Now, after my recent visit this summer, I see that things have also drastically changed there, and that statement is no longer valid.

It's vital to check in with yourself a few times a day, paying attention to how you feel. If you're tired, give yourself permission to rest. If you're hungry, nourish your body with food. When stress creeps in, take a moment to breathe and find calm. Remember to acknowledge your emotions and listen to what your body is trying to communicate. I went through a period of learning how to “manage” everything, but then came a profound “aha” moment. Instead of merely “managing” or “fighting”, I wanted to THRIVE, despite having MS. It was a simple shift in mindset, but it made an immense difference in how I approached life. By prioritizing self-awareness and embracing a positive perspective, I found the strength to thrive beyond MS. I hope this small change in mindset can also make a significant impact on your journey. Remember, the power is in your mind.

If you're reading this without a diagnosis but feeling overwhelmed, take a moment to pause and breathe. The answers will come, but for now, focus on what you can change. You already know that your health is in your hands, and there are many things you can do right now to improve it. For those who have already been diagnosed and are reading this book seeking hope or a path to healing, my advice remains the same. Be kind to yourself, and remember, just like Dr. Wahls said: “Don't give too much credit to the diagnosis.” Highlight some actionable tips from the book that you can try today. Whether you have MS or not, if you experience symptoms, your body might be inflamed, and you should explore ways to reduce inflammation. It may not be an easy process, but you are capable of doing it.

My chapter wouldn't be complete without mentioning Matt Embry and his incredible organization, mshope.com. If you're not sure where to begin, I highly recommend downloading his free cookbook. If you want to be truly inspired, watch his documentary *Living Proof*. It's eye-opening to witness how one person's unwavering determination and resilience inspired an entire community and brought hope to those facing challenges.

One thing is certain: continuing with the same lifestyle may not be the best approach. While medication can slow down progression, it doesn't guarantee protection from other potential illnesses. It's crucial to proactively manage your condition by embracing positive changes in your diet, mindset, and nurturing your body from within. I believe in the efficacy of food as medicine and the value of mindfulness in healing. Cultivating a wholesome lifestyle provides a solid foundation for supporting remission and complementing medication when necessary.

You might wonder why I took on this enormous project of publishing this book, and why now? The answer to the first part is quite straightforward. I envisioned a book that could serve as a practical guide for those newly diagnosed with MS. I wish this book was available when I got diagnosed; it would have made things much easier. Regarding the second question, it's a bit tricky. I might have considered waiting until my kids were older because raising a four-year-old and a two-year-old can be quite demanding. However, I've come to realize that people getting diagnosed today can't afford to wait. They need this guidance right now to know where to start. My purpose with this book is to raise awareness about how our lifestyle choices influence our health. It's about returning to fundamental principles, not necessarily living under trees (although that might be fun!), but rather focusing on aspects that genuinely impact our well-being.

These days, I balance being a stay-at-home mom, a certified health coach, and a graphic and web designer. I'm also an MS warrior and a friend here to support you on your journey. Looking back over the past four years, I take pride in my emotional, spiritual, and physical progress. My hope is that you too experience the same sense of accomplishment. For me, it all began with the creation of my Instagram account, [@BeatingMyMS](#). Today, my aspiration is to launch a program where I can share the knowledge I've gained and organize retreats focused on inner healing. If you're ready to take the first step towards a brighter, more hopeful future, I invite you to join me by visiting [BeatingMultipleSclerosis.com](#). Together, we can work towards regaining our health and explore thriving.

My “Emergency List” to Improve Mood and Symptoms

1. **Breathe:** Try the 4x4 breathing exercise - inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, exhale for 4 seconds, and pause for 4 seconds. Repeat this 8 times for immediate relaxation.
2. **Cold Shower:** Shift your mood and increase your energy with a cold-water shower. Start warm, then switch to cold for thirty seconds. Use this time to dance, sing, or take deep breaths.
3. **Meditation:** Download a 5-10 minute meditation on your phone, or simply close your eyes and envision yourself in your happy place, doing what brings you joy. Engage your senses—smell the air, feel the grass, touch the trees.
4. **Mindful Eating:** Have a quick protein smoothie or a colorful meal. Sit down, chew slowly, and fully savor the taste and textures of your food while avoiding distractions.
5. **Hydration:** Drink 1-2 glasses of water with electrolytes, a pinch of sea salt, or a slice of fresh lemon.
6. **Embrace Nature:** Step outside for fresh air. Sit under the sky or take a walk to connect with nature.
7. **Physical Activity:** Release emotions with exercise tailored to your preference - 10 burpees (works for me) or a gentle stretch. Listen to your body’s needs.
8. **Read:** Always have a book or audiobook ready. Start something new or continue a favorite to shift your mood. Social media doesn’t count.
9. **Journal:** Remind yourself that whatever you feel is temporary, and things will improve. Write it down in a journal or on paper. Be kind to yourself.
10. **Supplements:** Check if you’ve taken them for the day to support your overall well-being.

Recommended reads:

The Wahls Protocol by Terry Wahls

Cured by Jeffrey Rediger

The Mood Cure by Julia Ross

Becoming Supernatural by Joe Dispenza

Forever Young by Mark Hyman

Overcoming Multiple Sclerosis by George Jelinek

The Autoimmune Fix by Tom O’Bryan

The Microbiome Solution by Robynne Chutkan

Feeding You Lies by Vani Hari

Medical Medium by Anthony William

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.