

First Combat, Then Conversation

Category: Hope

written by Renee Davis | July 11, 2017

2010: I'm a 25-year-old premedical student, an herbalist and a volunteer at a free clinic. I'm experiencing unaccountable fatigue, achiness, brain fog and dizziness. After a series of medical evaluations, I receive a dreaded diagnosis—Lyme disease, the same infection that crippled my mother, that I now feel twisting my body and contorting my mind. I am infected with terror.

I consult a doctor who immediately prescribes several rounds of antibiotics. *This is an emergency. We have to fight.* Antibiotics are my weapon to exorcise these demons. In three months, I'll be fine, I'm assured. Here's an example of my protocol:

100mg doxycycline twice a day
500mg tindamax twice a day
250mg grapefruit seed extract twice a day
200mg nystatin three times a day
30 drops samento extract twice a day
500mg Smilax capsules twice a day
500mg cur cumin three times a day
300mg N-acetyl-cysteine once a day
500mg Vitamin C four times a day

Three months become four years of treatment. I spend my work breaks vomiting in the bathroom, endure innumerable hours weeping from bone-deep fatigue, incur food allergies and sensitivities, develop autoimmune hypothyroidism.

My life constricts. I feel as if I'm in a glass room, separated from the world. I pound my fists on the glass, screaming, for release. Over time, my fists become bloodied. I feel brittle and broken. I mourn the shrapnel of my identity.

2014: I meet a doctor who practices a different way. He describes his method of clinical practice as a conversation with the body. He possesses a curiosity about chronic infections: *What is burdening the immune system? Is this truly chronic Lyme or post-Lyme syndrome? Is the patient depleted in some way?* I once dismissed this approach as too indirect for something so serious. But I am now humbled. Broken enough to allow something new to seep in through the cracks.

With new eyes, we discover several comorbidities: Epstein-Barr virus, nutrient deficiencies, celiac disease. My house, it turns out, is infested with toxic black mold. By addressing these factors, the infection eventually recedes into remission. I regain energy. My life expands.

I still love a good fight. (I believe one must, in order to contemplate a medical career.) But in this case, combat created brokenness. Curiosity and conversation mended it.

Renee Davis
Olympia, Washington