

# What Every Good Lyme Sufferer Should Know

Life is not fair. Neither is having to deal with chronic lyme disease, but that's the boat many of us are in. Much like the grieving process, there will be steps, or stages, to go thru in accepting your diagnosis of chronic lyme disease. This is difficult, as you realize that having chronic lyme disease will change your life in many ways. Not all of the changes will be negative, but your finances can be strained, as will relationships. Hopefully as you go thru your personal journey back to health, you can begin to celebrate the positive changes having to deal with lyme disease can bring into your life. Some of those changes can include being healthier than before with a better diet and hard work, personal and spiritual growth, and a closer set of friends and a new support system.

The stages of grief are:

- Denial and isolation
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

How many of these steps sound familiar when compared to your journey with lyme disease? After all, we are grieving the loss of life as we know it. I think it is common for many of us to spend a lot of time – years even - bouncing back and forth between denial/isolation and depression. We bargain with God or whomever to help us to feel better, usually while we're angry. We're depressed because we're isolated from our families and friends by chronic lyme disease. We're angry because our friends are healthy and living life to the fullest while we have to celebrate having the energy to finally take a shower. It's not fair!!

Life is not fair, and neither is having to deal with chronic lyme disease. But you have the unique opportunity to reinvent yourself into the best, healthiest, kindest person you can be. You will have to make sacrifices and give things up (think processed sugar), and maybe your circumstances will change. Once you've **accepted** that your life is going to be different living with lyme, you're ready for the real healing to begin. What I think every lymie needs to know is...

**It is up to YOU to get well.** It is NOT up to your doctor (and I don't care whom your LLMD is!) to get you healthy again. I don't mean to be harsh, but your doctor cannot follow you around to make sure you're taking your pills and supplements at the right time in the right way, that you're drinking enough water, that you're following your detox protocol, that you're following the best diet for yourself, etc. While you might have family or friends that can help you with some of these things, unfortunately the majority of the burden falls on YOU. Do the best you can every day, but...

**Reach out to your support system when you need to.** None of us are fighting this disease alone. We are all in the battle of chronic lyme **together**. I know some of you are blessed with family to help you, or are in the online Facebook lyme community. If you don't have family in the area or spend a lot of your time online, the support group IS your support system. You all have my number, and perhaps the numbers and emails of others in the group. Reach out when you're feeling depressed or overwhelmed, I (we) will be there.

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**Recognize that you will most likely have to do more to get yourself well than simply taking the medicines your doctor prescribes.** Unless you're one of the lucky ones that does not have a heavy co-infection load, or high level of outside toxins in their body, or the wrong/right combination of genetic factors, you will likely have to make some major lifestyle changes. Some people just seem to get sicker from chronic lyme than others – I think it is a combination of factors including previous mold exposure, toxin load, pathogen load, your health before getting infected with lyme, your diet, genetic factors, the amount of exercise you're able to get, and the amount of fresh air and water... the list goes on. You will likely have to make some lifestyle changes that include but are not limited to giving up sugar and alcohol, getting structured exercise, changing your diet, maybe even having to move if you live in a location where you are constantly exposed to mold or chemicals. Try to see these changes as an opportunity for growth, and maybe better health for your whole family.

**If you have been exposed to mold in either the home or work place, you need to deal with the mold toxicity before you can get well.** This is very important, and overlooked by many. Fungus in the body is immuno-suppressive, as is lyme disease. Mold toxicity can cause a variety of symptoms, many of which resemble lyme – brain fog, sinus issues, pain, hormone imbalance, etc. If mold is an issue, it MUST be addressed before you can truly heal from lyme. Addressing mold includes removing yourself from the moldy environment if remediation is not possible, and detoxing heavily to remove the mold circulating in your body.

**Realize that the better your diet is, the better you will feel.** At least 70% of your immune system is in your gut. Everything you put into your body is either medicine to nourish it or poison for it to deal with. Or, as my friend Shelby says so well, “If you eat crap, you will feel like crap.” Ideally we should all be eating a gluten, sugar, dairy, and soy free organic diet, consuming only grass-fed, free range organic meats and eggs. Realistically, we have to do the best we can with what our budget and energy allows. We'll talk more on why diet is so important at a later date.

**Know that when in treatment, you'll have to devote more time to resting and detoxing.** When we're in treatment, we need to be extra kind to ourselves. Lyme is hard on the body, but so is killing off all of those pathogens. Know a herx reaction is likely, and that you will need to put more time and effort into detoxing. Remember to make time to rest when your body needs it. It is not a sign of weakness to need rest, so don't think of it as such. **Listen to your body.**

**Understand that because lyme changes your body, you might have to make certain changes to the products you use.** Sometimes we develop allergies to products we've used for most of our lives. Chemical sensitivities may mean we have to change our favorite soaps or lotions to unscented products. (Hopefully you've already made some changes after we talked about toxins several months ago.) We might also become allergic to things like adhesives and latex. Find alternatives, and try to get excited about your new, non-toxic soaps and beauty products. Instead of being upset you can no longer tolerate your favorite cologne or perfume, concentrate on the fact that you are taking good care of your body and loving yourself, despite the immense stress and anxiety you face daily as a result of lyme disease. Remember that others have made these changes as well; reach out socially for hints and recipes that others have tried and liked, instead of trying to figure everything out on your own.

**Realize that the more gentle exercise you can get daily, the better you and your body will feel.** Obviously I don't mean that if you're bed-or-house-bound you should get up and try to run a mile

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each day. But you should walk around the house as much as your energy and body allows. Do more when you are able to. Also remember that deep breathing can count as exercise, especially when bed or house bound. Exercise helps promote blood flow, releases serotonin which helps mood stability and reduces inflammation. Inflammation equals pain, so the more you can reduce your inflammation levels, the less overall pain you will have. I highly recommend either gentle yoga or tai chi, as both of these exercises are gentle on the body, and improve balance and breathing, but encourage everyone to find the exercise regimen that fits themselves and their lifestyles best.

**Know, and believe, that remission is in your future.** As hard as it is, try to keep a positive attitude as you battle lyme. When needed, **reach out** to your support system and fellow lymies. Reaching remission is a difficult road, and each person's path to health is unique. You are the only one that can control your journey. Use your friends, family, doctor, and the support group as guides, but ultimately YOUR health is in YOUR hands. Take an active role in your health by eliminating outside toxins, having a good diet, drinking plenty of clean water, and doing the best you can each day. And always remember, we are stronger together. Lean on one another for support and encouragement during your journey, and together we can all beat what is known as chronic lyme disease. Please also note that there will always be some in your social community who focus solely on everything wrong in their lives. These individuals can be toxic, and know that it is ok to step away from that situation and surround yourself with others who believe in the positive, whether or not they personally have reached remission yet.

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