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Crohn's Disease and Stress

By Ed Kalski

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by: **Ed Kalski**

It was so tough in those early years. Not knowing what was wrong. I didn't know what to think. Was I going crazy? The doctor said I have a nervous stomach. I'm not a nervous person.

Then I was diagnosed with Crohn's Disease. Even though it's a chronic disease without a cure, it was a relief to know what was wrong. But then the reality set in. How was my life going to change?

And change it did. In 1985 I was admitted into a hospital suffering from a stomach obstruction. A surgeon had to remove a foot and a half from my small intestines. The pain was terrible. I never, repeat never, want to go through that pain again. Ever.

After going through the pain of an operation, knowing that people with Crohn's Disease can have more than one operation, I couldn't help but wonder what I could do to help my situation? It occurred to me that, in the least, I could learn to handle the stress from the disease and the stress from life itself. I knew that stress, in and of itself, could cause my symptoms to worsen.

No, the stress didn't cause Crohn's Disease, but it sure could affect the amount of pain I would experience. I knew it was possible for me to deal with my stress better than I had dealt with it in the past. Before the operation, I was fairly motivated to work at controlling my stress. After the operation, I was highly motivated. I was determined to do everything in my power to improve my situation.

So how could I handle life's stress better? I had to learn what I could about dealing with stress and to then develop the necessary skills to make it happen. I learned about the close relationship between relaxation and stress relief. I learned to meditate, I learned to set reasonable expectations about my life and desires, and I learned to be more objective about what was happening to me physically and mentally.

Crohn's Disease and Stress

I've come to the conclusion that people with Crohn's Diseases can do a lot to help themselves with the stress in their life. Not only can we do a lot to help ourselves, but we can also get support from loved ones as well as others going through the same circumstances.

I have three steps to offer others to help them control the stress in their lives. The first is to learn to meditate, the second is to learn visualization and the third is to get support.

By watching my emotions closely, I could know quickly when the stress in my life was building up too fast. I could then take a little time to meditate. I learned the different strategies of meditation and found one that worked good for me.

In addition to meditation, I learned visualization. Whenever I felt myself getting stressed out, I could visualize myself at St. Simon Island, a place I love and go to once a year. Just thinking of the different locations on the Island, I could feel myself relax. And with practice I've got quite good at visualization.

Finally, there's the Crohn's Disease message boards on the internet. What a wonderful resource they are. To be able to talk with people who are going through the same situation. You can't put a price on that. It's invaluable. I highly recommend everyone with Crohn's Disease to use this resource.

I believe that anyone with Crohn's Disease (or any chronic disease) can improve their life by taking the time to learn and implement the three part strategy I've outlined above. It's has worked wonderfully for me and I believe it can work for others as well.

Ed Kalski has had Crohn's Disease for over 25 years. He has created a website for people with Crohn's Disease that provides a lot of valuable information and links to many resources.

Visit the website at:

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Crohn's Disease

By Dr. Rita Louise

Crohn's disease is often confused with other inflammatory bowel disorders such as irritable bowel syndrome and ulcerative colitis, thus making it difficult to diagnose. Crohn's disease can affect any part of the digestive tract, from the mouth to the anus. Crohn's disease is characterized by an inflammatory reaction throughout the entire thickness of the colon and bowel wall. This inflammation can penetrate deeply into the affected organ, causing pain and diarrhea.

Symptoms associated with Crohn's disease include abdominal pain, diarrhea, rectal bleeding (which may lead to anemia), weight loss, malabsorption syndrome and nutritional deficiencies. The onset of Crohn's disease is typically between the ages of fourteen and thirty. Cases of this disorder tend to be 2–4 times more common in Caucasian whites than non–Caucasian, and 4 times more common in Jews

than non-Jews.

Crohn's disease is typically experienced as flair-up, with attacks occurring every few months to every few years. Over time, if the disease is active, bowel function can gradually deteriorate, with the risk of cancer increasing by 20 fold.

Scientists believe that chronic imbalances in the intestinal flora set off a chain of events that, in the end, damages the intestinal mucosa. This theory is strongly supported by the parallel in the number of cases of Crohn's and other inflammatory bowel disorders and use of antibiotics over the last 50 years. In turn, it has also been found that the incidence of Crohn's disease is higher in cultures consuming a "western diet", while it is virtually non-existent in cultures consuming a more primitive diet. Studies also reveal that patients with Crohn's disease were found to be individuals who habitually ate, prior to the onset of symptoms, more refined sugar, less raw fruits, vegetables and dietary fiber when compared to their healthy counterparts.

While the exact causes of Crohn's disease is still unclear, there is much that can be done to lessen symptoms and even put this disorder into remission. The goal for treatment of this disorder is to control inflammation, correct nutritional deficiencies and relieve symptoms such as pain, diarrhea and rectal bleeding.

Recommendations for Wellness

- 1) An elimination diet, such as Gottschall's Specific Carbohydrate Diet have been shown to reduce the symptoms experienced within 3 – 12 weeks.
- 2) Avoid sugar, both white sugars, and the sugars contained in white flower, white rice etc.
- 3) Keep a food/flair-up journal. Identify foods you are eating, or your emotional state just before and during a "flair-up". In time, you may find a pattern forming
- 4) To reduce intestinal inflammation and begin the healing process, try products such as UltraInflamx – by Metagenics, Robert's formula – by Phytophamric, or aloe vera juice.
- 5) Flax seed or fish oils (Omega 3 Oils) have been known to greatly reduce the inflammatory process. If you find you have a hard time digesting them, try freezing the gel caps before taking them.
- 6) Extra vitamins and minerals are important at this time, especially if you are not absorbing nutrients correctly. Incorporate a liquid meal replacement (one that is loaded with vitamins, minerals and protein, and low on sugar!) into your diet as well as taking a high quality vitamin and minerals supplement. Try to find one that is in a gel casing or capsule.
- 7) Find a good mineral supplement such as Alfalfa, barley greens, liquid chlorophyll or colloidal minerals. Many of these come in a powdered form that you can mix with water or juice.

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8) Because of blood loss due to rectal bleeding, and the anemia associated with it, incorporation of additional iron is important. Look to find an herbal iron alternative, especially one that comes in liquid form for better/easier assimilation. If you decide to look to a single herb, Yellow Dock would be my choice. (Consult with your health care provider before introducing additional iron into your diet.)

9) Starting a program of re-inoculating the intestinal tract with Friendly Bacteria, namely lactoacidophilis can enhance recovery and restore bowel function to normal.

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Dr. Rita Louise of Body, Mind & SoulHealer helps people rediscover their wholeness by working with individuals on physical, emotional and spiritual levels. The author of the book entitled "The Power Within" and editor of the SoulHealer newsletter, Dr. Louise is a Naturopath, Medical Intuitive, Clairvoyant, Vibrational Healer, teacher and Lecturer. She can be reached by calling (972) 475-3393 or you can visit her web page at

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