



comfortandencourage.com
Living Well Despite Pain

Newsletter 2008
First Edition

Welcome to the first edition of my comfortandencourage.com email newsletters! Thank you for signing up to receive them, and also thank you for visiting my young site. It has been an exciting few weeks since comfortandencourage.com has gone live; thank you for your feedback and your product orders. It is my number one desire that this new site will provide you with just what it is named for: comfort and encouragement. I am happy to be able to walk with you along your journey with facial pain. I believe that together, we are better.

A bit more about me....

I developed TN in 2005, at the age of 48. I simply was taking a sip of my morning coffee, when a jolt shot through my face which felt like a burning hot poker. I certainly did not imagine then, that my life was about to change in a big way.

My journey has been one of highs and lows; of hopes realized and of hopes shattered. I have tried dozens of treatments, medications, alternative therapies, and home remedies in my quest for pain management; in addition to three surgeries, with mixed results, including: Gamma Knife, Glycerin Rizotomy with Radiofrequency (a double procedure); and a micro-vascular decompression (MVD) just this past April. The photo of my family above was taken at Easter, just a few weeks before my MVD. That's my husband of 29 years, Warren, beside me, and also our three children and daughter-in-law.



My family has been a constant source of support in this journey, and they, along with several close friends, keep me walking along this path. I have needed their strength in my weakness, for despite my best efforts, I live with constant pain. My teeth and tongue feel like they are burning all the time; I have areas in my face which burn and ache most of the time, and sometimes are triggered into those awful hot poker -like "strikes" of pain, although they are much less frequent since my MVD. One of my most difficult issues currently is my extreme sensitivity to sounds, light, and textures; along with my impaired taste and smell. These have most likely arisen as the result of negative surgical side-effects, and although they are greatly challenging, most days I am up for the challenge. On the days that I am not, I hold onto the hope that better days will follow.

I tell you all of this because it has been my goal since the beginning, to live authentically with this illness, being honest about the trials involved. Yet, it is also my goal to see the goodness life through and despite the pain, and to point others to that as well. My life has changed, and I miss the old one much of the time; however, I have been given a new one which is full and wonderful despite its difficulties. I will be sharing in these newsletters how the pain does not define my life, and how it need not define yours.

Beginning with some thoughts about Thanksgiving...While working on this writing, I am also getting dinner preparations together for a pre-Thanksgiving dinner tonight, since my family will not all be together on Thanksgiving day. As I have been cooking, I am remembering last year, when my pain was so very awful, I could not prepare a Thanksgiving meal. A few caring neighbors, came to my aid, and prepared a fabulous Thanksgiving feast! This is just one memory of hundreds of ways I have been cared for by others, and on this holiday, I am humbled by the people who give with no expectation of receiving in kind.

This Thanksgiving, I hope that you too will pause and consider how much you have for which to be grateful. As I send this out to you, I do so with prayers for comfort from pain, for knowing that others care about you and about facial pain, and for dreams that may have been left by the wayside, but believing that new ones are around the corner.

Happy, Blessed Thanksgiving,

Judi

Making a Choice...

This will be my fourth holiday season in pain. I finally "get" that facial pain is not a "curable" illness. Although many people are well managed through treatment, many of us are not. Instead, for many of us, pain ebbs and flows; and living well despite pain is a choice we must make every single day. We can make that choice, and our pain can be reduced if we stay committed to making positive differences in our overall

health. What follows are some of the ways I have learned to simplify the holidays and expand their joy.

The Holidays are Here.... Are You Feeling "Blessed", or "Stressed"?!



Here are just four ways I have found joy in the holidays, despite pain:

1 - I resist the urge to "keep everything as normal as possible."

There is nothing "normal" about living with facial pain, and when I cover up my pain, my friends and loved ones do not learn to develop a respect for the changes I need to make to live well. I try to tell them honestly about my pain, and I recruit their help to figure out just what is most important in the holiday season to us, and I focus on those things.

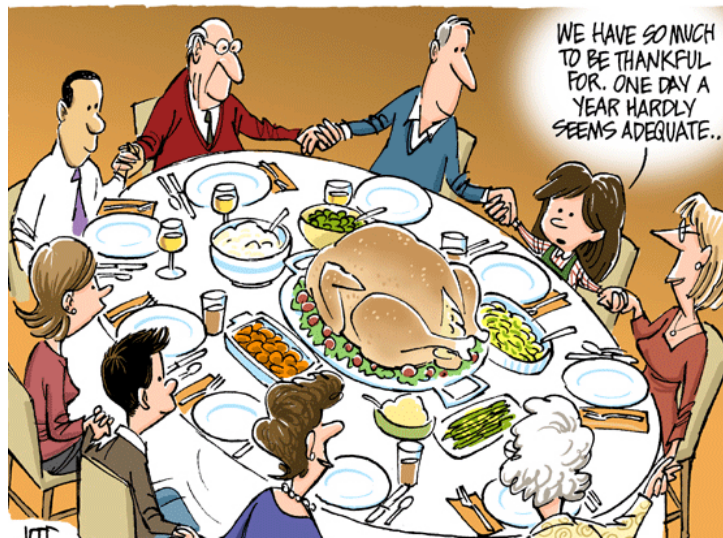
2 - I treat my energy like it's a checking account. I consider what "adds to" my energy balance, such as rest, exercising, and being with people I enjoy; and then I carefully "spend" my energy on activities and commitments that are within my balance. I can tell when I am dipping too far into my account, when pain worsens, or I begin to struggle with making decisions, or I feel depressed and anxious.

3 - I have pajama days when the pain is just too high. I no longer feel guilty about doing so, because I have found that staying in my pajamas is a good reminder to rest. I just don't let it grow into two days or three days without examining what is going on: Is it pain? Is it depression? I have asked my husband to help me recognize when pajama days are becoming pajama "de-lays" so that I get extra medical help or counseling if needed. One of my favorite memories from last year, was spending a "pajama day" sitting beside my lighted Christmas Tree and reading Christmas cards—I enjoyed reading them unhurriedly and it gave me an opportunity to thank God for the people in my life who cared enough to send their Christmas greetings to me.

4 - I made a call to "COPE" on a particularly difficult week. COPE (visit www.copewithlife.com) uses phone technology so callers can access personalized, clinically sound advice, from any touch-tone phone, 24-hours a day.

Dr. John Greist, CEO of Healthcare Technology Systems and clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of Wisconsin Medical School in Madison, Wisconsin, helped to develop COPE. This is what he says: "COPE was developed to help people who don't have the time, access or finances for traditional psychotherapy. It's a complementary program for traditional psychotherapy, as well as a self-help tool for those who want to gain more control over their lives."

During the holidays, COPE is especially convenient because a person doesn't need to make an appointment, then maybe wait weeks to get in to see someone---after the crush of the holidays have passed. COPE callers can access advice for their concerns even in the middle of the night. For more information call (888) 320-7745.



Christmas Shopping Ideas from comfortandencouragement.com

Our products make wonderful Christmas presents—why don't you forward our site as a "wish list"

New: "Christmas Hope" Bracelet, done in red, green and white—with "hope" painted on one central bead--to remind you to keep Hope alive all through this season. It's also at a special price of \$15.50, and remember, \$1.00 of it is donated to the Trigeminal Neuralgia Association!

