

# MIND POWER

## your attitude affects your health

Your attitude can make you sick. It can also make you well. Hundreds of testimonials prove this and science is scrambling to learn exactly why. But why bother analyzing it? If it works, so be it.

That's the attitude taken by Patreace Starr of Cloverdale. That attitude helped her overcome Multiple Sclerosis. Patreace isn't a scientist. And she certainly isn't attempting to explain the power of our minds. But she intuitively knew healing begins in the mind.

Self-efficacy is believing something can be done to change a situation and that you yourself are capable of the change. Patreace Starr decided to become self-efficient. It was time to take control of her life by controlling her attitude.

Patreace's story is a long, sad and complicated one of physical and emotional abuse. She suffered child abuse, spousal abuse, anorexia, and in 1978 showed moderate symptoms of Multiple Sclerosis (MS).

She firmly believes high levels of abuse can create "dis-order" in the body. She feels the trapped emotions contributed to her anorexia (now under control) and her development of MS.

"We lock bad experiences and dark emotions in our minds and bodies," says Patreace. "You have to learn to accept and release these feelings, or they become

deeply embedded physically and psychologically."

Patreace's negative emotions were so well entrenched, she had absolutely no memory of them. She was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in 1987. She volunteered for a clinical study and working with a registered psychologist she was able to face her past and then firmly leave it there.

Although her MS was diagnosed as "moderate" in 1978, she temporarily lost her eyesight after both her pregnancies. This symptom can occur in the early stages of MS, or in those who may be at risk for the disorder in the future. Today Patreace's MRI shows no indication of the cloudy masses (plaque damage) typical in those with MS.

Her healing journey began in 1983 when friends suggested yoga classes, "Which turned my life around," says Patreace. She was delighted to find yoga relieved her MS discomfort. In addition, the breathing practices helped focus her mind in training it to think positively. Encouraged by the results, Patreace became certified as a Rehabilitative Yoga Instructor. Her MS experience makes her a compassionate role model as well as a knowledgeable instructor to those with MS, fibromyalgia and other disorders.

Patreace also pursued other healing therapies to enforce her commitment to self-efficacy, such as deep tissue massage. She encourages those suffering with illness to explore all therapies and treatments, but advises to always keep mental attitude top priority.

"Read, read, read everything you can find about positive thinking," she stresses.

Patreace practiced positive affirmations daily, even going as far as splitting words to make them less negative, "If I suddenly feel discomfort about something, I take the word apart and think comfort instead."

Constantly playing mind games like this strengthened her positive outlook, which contributed to building her self-esteem. This enabled her to break her self-abuse cycle of returning to an abusive husband.

Patreace's past is a tragic one, but we all experience some form of trauma. It's part of life. Even if your traumas are minor, it's important to face emotions and experiences instead of hiding them. You may be risking your good health, warns Patreace.

"Never consider anything a problem. See it as a challenge instead," she advises. "My problems were challenges that actually enhanced my life. I've learned much from them and became a better person."

Her compassion for others extends past her yoga studio. The former Community Social Services Worker now works in the health care field. For the last two years she's been a caregiver to a young man with Spina Bifida (a congenital defect of the spinal column).

While Patreace inspires hope in us all, she's enjoying life with her two sons and new grandchild expected this August. She has faced and fought her demons with a smile, "I'm learning to accept myself now. At 56 I am finally free. I have a new life!"

For information about Restorative Yoga, contact Patreace Starr at 604-576-1990 or reace@shaw.ca ■

***Eve Lees, a former newspaper editor, has been a health and fitness professional for over 20 years. She is a Certified Nutrition & Wellness Specialist, a Certified Personal Trainer, a health speaker, and a health writer for several publications.***

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