

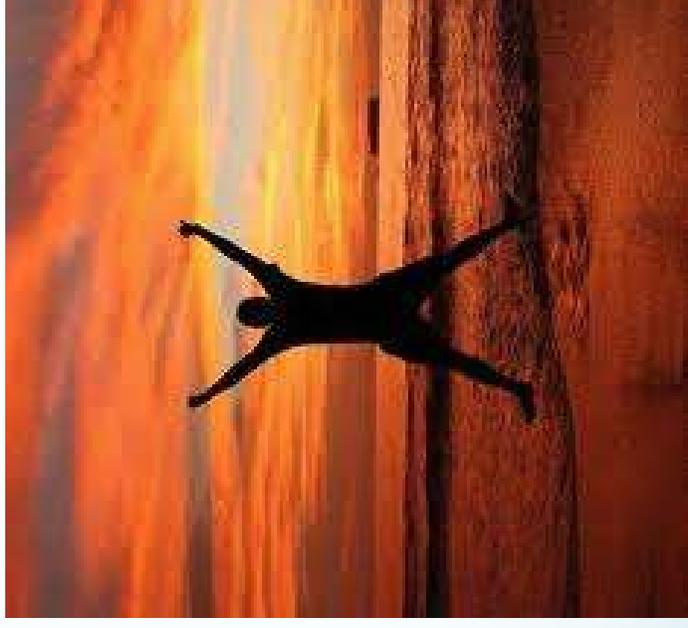
# Confronting the Demon of Fear when faced with illness

By Lucie Brunet

with help from

David Sherwood

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# Who we are

- © David and Lucie have been partners for 20 years.
- © They live in Ste-Anne-de-Prescott.
- © Their daughter Camille lives with them.
- © They have two sons and four grandchildren.
- © They are avid gardeners and active volunteers.



# What happened

- ⦿ Last year, Lucie developed a speech disability.
- ⦿ Her tongue is partially paralyzed so she slurs her words.
- ⦿ Other symptoms also showed up.
- ⦿ A career woman, she suddenly had to stop working.
- ⦿ The medical diagnosis includes some scary outcomes.

# What this presentation is about

## **Part 1:**

Practical tips and strategies on how to deal with fear when facing illness or other life crises

## **Part 2:**

Lucie's journey of hopefulness

# Part 1: Tips and strategies

How do we prevent fear and illness  
from taking over our entire lives?

These tips and strategies can be  
applied to a wide range of life  
altering situations.



# Getting sick can be scary!

- ⊙ You feel your life is turned upside down....
- ⊙ Things aren't the way they used to be....
- ⊙ You're uncomfortable stepping into the unknown...
- ⊙ You wonder what will happen to you next...
- ⊙ Maybe you're afraid of the future...
- ⊙ **So.... How do you deal with the Demon of Fear?**

# Imagine a scenario where...

- ⊙ You develop a speech disability.
- ⊙ You're forced to stop working.
- ⊙ You lose your professional identity and income.
- ⊙ You can't take part in group conversations.
- ⊙ You can't express yourself spontaneously.
- ⊙ People often don't understand you.
- ⊙ It's frustrating and humiliating.

# ... you're told you have a serious illness

- ⊙ It's an illness that is untreatable, incurable and fatal.
- ⊙ There are only 3,000 Canadians with this illness.
- ⊙ 80% die within 5 years, some within months.
- ⊙ The only medication prolongs life by only 3 months.

# ... the diagnosis is ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease

- ⊙ Motor neuron cells which control voluntary muscles die.
- ⊙ The illness develops differently in people at varying speeds. Each case is unique, it's impossible to generalize.
- ⊙ Some people lose the use of their legs and/or arms first. Others lose their speech first.
- ⊙ The odds are high that you will eventually become a prisoner of your body, unable to eat, swallow, move, dress, wash, speak, breathe, etc. without the help of others or a machine.
- ⊙ Your senses and your brain won't be affected.

# To illustrate the impact of ALS

- ① Take a tissue (kleenex) in your hand. Notice which fingers you use to pick up, to hold it.
- ② Feel the softness of the tissue under your fingers. Close your eyes and touch gently your cheek or forehead with it.
- ③ Imagine for a minute that you're in the advanced stages of ALS and you're unable to pick up the tissue and bring it to your face. You're not able to speak. You have to rely on others for everything....



# How would you respond?

If you were told that you have a life-altering illness:

- ⊙ HOW WOULD THAT MAKE YOU FEEL?
- ⊙ WOULD YOU BE AFRAID OR NOT?
- ⊙ WOULD YOU BE PROACTIVE OR NOT?
- ⊙ HOW WOULD YOU WANT TO SPEND YOUR TIME?

# Real fear can be healthy

- ⦿ It's normal and even useful to feel afraid when confronted with real danger.  
For example:
  - ⦿ An armed burglar breaks into your house.
  - ⦿ Your dog is attacked by a vicious animal.
  - ⦿ You have an accident and you are hurt.
- ⦿ These are very real when they happen. The fear creates adrenalin to help us act.



# What about imaginary fears?

- ⦿ These fears are usually about things in the future that may not materialize.
- ⦿ They can make us feel paralyzed if we don't use the adrenalin that's created by the fear to step into action.
- ⦿ These fears can be a bad guide when we're trying to make the best decisions.

# We tend to fear what we can't control...

- ⊙ what might happen to us in our worst scenarios
- ⊙ the unruly emotions of our minds and wild thoughts
- ⊙ the unreliable character of our bodies
- ⊙ uncultivated nature
- ⊙ death
- ⊙ all the little echoes of death that appear in everyday changes and that force us to let go of our familiar patterns and comfortable habits

# Fear is in the future

- ⦿ So focus on today.
- ⦿ Is the scary scenario true right now?
- ⦿ Did it happen yet?
- ⦿ “FEAR = Forgetting that Everything is All Right”
- ⦿ Be practical: make contingency plans.
- ⦿ OK to Prepare for the Worst, but always Hope for the Best.

# Connecting with fear

- ⦿ If you experienced fear when we introduced the ALS diagnostic, where did this show up in your body? emotions? thoughts?
- ⦿ Let's reconnect with this fear for a moment.
- ⦿ Come back to the present moment. e.g. What colour is the wall? What do you notice about your clothes?
- ⦿ Take a big breath in, call upon your inner strength.
- ⦿ As you breathe out, release the fear. Trust that all is well.

# Be kind to yourself

- ⦿ No matter how well-intentioned you may be to be brave and courageous, there are days where you may “lose it” and be overcome with grief, worry, anger, etc.
- ⦿ Don't judge yourself. Have compassion for yourself.
- ⦿ What is happening now is the best that can happen right now.
- ⦿ Tomorrow is another day.

# Accept your feelings

- ⊙ Accept that this will be an emotional roller coaster. SO RIDE THE WAVE!
- ⊙ It's o.k. to feel...
  - ⊙ Angry
  - ⊙ Worried about the future
  - ⊙ Depressed
- ⊙ The key is to NOT STAY in that state for too long.
- ⊙ You need to use all of your energy for healing!
- ⊙ So come back to now and DO WHAT NEEDS DOING.

# Experience your feelings

- ⊙ Emotions are usually temporary, they come and go like clouds.
- ⊙ When an emotion surfaces (e.g. sadness, anger), it's real.
- ⊙ Let yourself feel it. Don't censor yourself.
- ⊙ Breathe and release. WHAT IS GOING ON? WHERE ARE YOU NOW?
- ⊙ An emotion that's not repressed loses its intensity and grip over time.

# Don't identify with the illness

- ⊙ You are NOT your illness!
- ⊙ Your SPIRIT is much greater than your illness.
- ⊙ .... or your body, your emotions, your thoughts, for that matter.
- ⊙ Always treat your illness with respect, like you would for a visitor or a roommate. Bless it.
- ⊙ Live as if you're healed!



# Dedramatize

- ⊙ Put things in perspective: there are always people worse off than you.
- ⊙ Many others are dealing with pain and suffering.
- ⊙ Remember that you are not alone.
- ⊙ Set limits to your “worrying time” and “leaking time” for complaining: it takes away your vital energy.

# Don't give your personal power away

- ⦿ It's your life, you decide how you want to live it.
- ⦿ Follow your intuition and inner guidance. Be proactive.
- ⦿ A medical diagnosis is ONE opinion. What if it's not true? Even the best doctors can and do make mistakes.
- ⦿ Live as though you're part of the "exceptions".
- ⦿ You decide how much you want to share about your illness and when. You can ask people to respect your wishes.

# The Biology of Belief (Bruce Lipton's work)

- ③ We have been programmed to believe that we can't heal ourselves.
- ③ We give our power away to others and ask them to heal us.
- ③ We have forgotten that we have the power to heal ourselves.
- ③ Our beliefs influence our biology. Science has shown that cells can thrive or die, depending on our perceptions.
- ③ We are not victims of our genes. Through our thoughts, we create our own reality.

# Healing vs. curing

- ⦿ Curing: usually occurs at the physical level, after medical intervention.
- ⦿ Healing: often at the emotional and spiritual level as well – the underlying factors of illness are explored.
- ⦿ Healing means FEELING WHOLE AND AT PEACE WITH WHAT IS.
- ⦿ You can have control over the healing part through positive thoughts, emotions and actions.



# Accept what is

- ⊙ Change is the only constant in life.
- ⊙ Practice accepting and welcoming small changes.
- ⊙ The more you resist, the more painful it gets.... What you resist ... persists!
- ⊙ Don't jump to the worst possible conclusions.
- ⊙ See how you can give a positive spin to the illness.
- ⊙ Could this be a blessing in disguise? What opportunity does it open up?

# Tend to your spirit

- ⦿ Each day, do at least one thing to feed your soul.
- ⦿ Honour your losses by expressing gratitude for what you've lost.
- ⦿ Grieving involves accepting that you're turning a page and doing it with compassion for yourself.
- ⦿ It may take time, you have to go at your own speed.
- ⦿ Focus on what you're still able to do. Do it and count your blessings.

# Do what needs doing

- ⦿ Even when we're sick, life goes on.
- ⦿ Ask yourself each day: what needs doing?
- ⦿ If you can, do things that support your well-being.
- ⦿ Lying on the sofa worrying can create more anxiety than doing the dishes...
- ⦿ Go at your own pace, ask for help with some tasks.
- ⦿ Let go of unrealistic expectations.



# Train your mind

- ⊙ The mind is like a little monkey, it goes all over the place.
- ⊙ It loves to create drama and upheaval.
- ⊙ You can train your mind to relax, to create spaciousness inside you.
- ⊙ Meditation is very helpful in calming the mind.
- ⊙ Give your mind something to do.
- ⊙ Tell your mind you're healed, whole and healthy.

# Stay in the present moment

- ⦿ Be mindful even when you do simple daily tasks. Pay attention to the details.
- ⦿ Very often, when we can be in the present moment, we realize that things are just fine.
- ⦿ It's when we project ourselves in the future that we become fearful.
- ⦿ Focus your attention on your breath. It's the best stress regulator.

# Open to pain and suffering

- ⊙ When facing pain and suffering, we can transform our relationship to it by **OPENING** rather than closing down.
- ⊙ When we close down, we feel less alive.
- ⊙ Connect to the pain of other people.
- ⊙ Visualize your pain as a ball of pins and needles. In your imagination, bury that ball into the ground.
- ⊙ Repeat: **ALL IS WELL.**

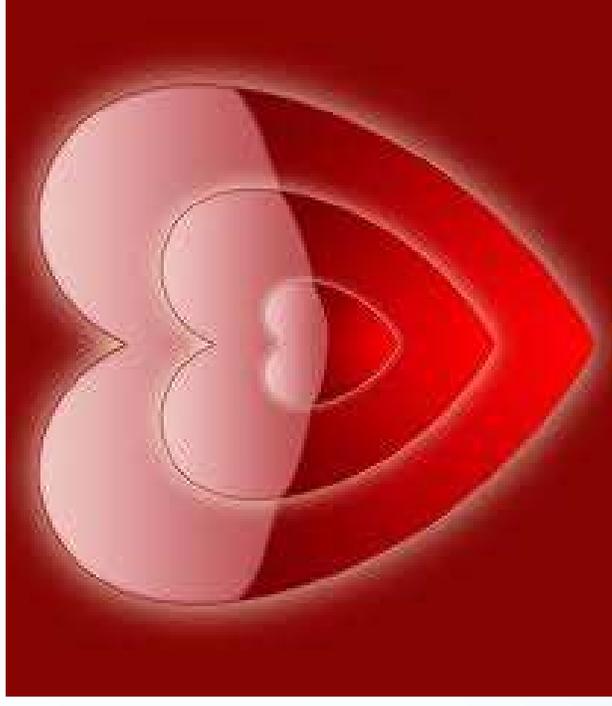


# Believe!

- ⊙ Believe that you can heal. Feel it and give thanks.
- ⊙ Daily affirmation: EVERY DAY I HEAL.
- ⊙ Suspend disbelief: believe that the impossible can become possible.
- ⊙ The miracles are in the small things.
- ⊙ Miracles happen to people who believe in them.
- ⊙ NEVER, EVER GIVE UP HOPE!

# Love energy heals!

- ⊙ We all need a community to heal.
- ⊙ Learn to receive and also to give in ways that don't deplete your energies.
- ⊙ Trust that all your needs will be taken care of.
- ⊙ Love energy is powerful and does heal.
- ⊙ Love yourself more!
- ⊙ Send love to the parts of your body that require TLC.



# Reinvent yourself

- ⊙ There is so much more to life than your illness!
- ⊙ What are your priorities now?
- ⊙ What brings you joy and satisfaction nowadays?
- ⊙ The only way out is forward. Dream new dreams.
- ⊙ Focus on at least one project that makes you feel alive.
- ⊙ You may not get to choose the cards you've been dealt with, but you can control how you respond.

# Be gentle with yourself

- ⦿ No matter how determined you are to win over the Demon of Fear, there may be tough times when you will become unravelled and the fear and the pain will seem overwhelming.
- ⦿ Don't judge yourself. You're doing the best you can.
- ⦿ Remember: this, too, shall pass.
- ⦿ What doesn't kill you, makes you stronger 😊

Part 2:  
Lucie's  
journey on the  
path of  
hopefulness



# My history

- ⊙ I was diagnosed with ALS in September 2011.
- ⊙ The first symptoms had started a year earlier.
- ⊙ At 57, I had always been healthy and had boundless energy.
- ⊙ I had been a consultant to non profit groups for 25 years.
- ⊙ My goal upon retiring was to offer energy and shamanic healing, having trained in these areas.

# ALS

- ⦿ The diagnosis is the “bulbar onset” form of ALS.
- ⦿ The tongue and throat muscles weaken and eventually become paralyzed.
- ⦿ This affects my speech and my ability to eat, drink and swallow. I may have to use a feeding tube in future.
- ⦿ I am exploring text to speech technology to communicate.
- ⦿ Muscle weakness is starting to spread to other parts of my body – like accelerated aging.
- ⦿ Fortunately, I’m still mobile, even though slower 😊

# What is it like?

- ⦿ Imagine being in a video game where you duck to avoid being hit by invisible forces.
- ⦿ It can be overwhelming at times.
- ⦿ I have “died” many deaths... many cycles of DEATH AND REBIRTH.
- ⦿ I’ve decided recently that I won’t die of ALS.
- ⦿ My spirit is becoming stronger.
- ⦿ I’m practicing resisting less to change.



# Faith and doubt

- ⊙ I'm told by the medical system that this illness is degenerative, incurable and untreatable.
- ⊙ Each visit to the ALS Clinic is an emotional setback because they prepare you for the next phase of degeneration!
- ⊙ Instead, I choose to believe that I will be healed. The healing has already started.
- ⊙ Some of my symptoms have been reversed.
- ⊙ I visualize myself fully recovered and speaking again.

# Peace and wellness bubble

- ③ I seek to create daily for myself a bubble where I can maintain inner peace and focus on wellness.
- ③ That is where the healing happens.
- ③ I push away people who project their own fears onto me.
- ③ My own spiritual practices (e.g. yoga, meditation, prayer, self-healing, beauty, music, travel to sacred places) help amplify the LIGHT within me.
- ③ I draw upon alternative therapies to help keep my vibration high.



# Reframing the situation

- ⊙ I am not my illness, I live with it.
- ⊙ I decided right away to give ALS a new meaning.
- ⊙ Through adversity, I have been able to attract many loving and generous people who pray, drum, meditate, do healing, etc. for me.
- ⊙ I ask for special blessings for my large support team.

ALS =  
Abundance  
of  
Love  
and  
Serenity

# Hoping and coping

- ⊙ David and I hope and cope... one breath at a time.
- ⊙ We sometimes cry when the Demon of Fear gets to us.
- ⊙ We do what needs to be done to respond to my health needs without buying into the catastrophic scenarios.
- ⊙ Depression is the main enemy to watch for.
- ⊙ I cringe at the possibility of becoming invalid, but I don't feel like a victim. If this is my karma, why would I expect anyone else to carry my load for me?

# How has illness transformed me?

- ⊙ My priorities have changed.
- ⊙ I value heartfelt connections and spiritual life.
- ⊙ I feel with compassion the pain of others.
- ⊙ I am moved by kindness and beauty.
- ⊙ I channel more guidance from the spirit world.
- ⊙ I confront my own limitations, my resistance to change.
- ⊙ I argue less with my teenage daughter 😊



# Death and dying

- ⊙ I'm not afraid of death. We're all going to die!!
- ⊙ Rather, it's the dying part I've been concerned about:
  - ⊙ the degeneration of the body...
  - ⊙ becoming totally dependent on others....
  - ⊙ the wear and tear on my caregivers....
  - ⊙ the grief my loved ones feel.....
- ⊙ What matters is bringing LOVE and LIGHT to the situation to transform it and living consciously until the end.

# Illness as an opportunity for expansion and evolution

- ③ If we see illness in a spiritual perspective as a SOUL ASSIGNMENT, then it becomes an opportunity for our soul to evolve.
- ③ It forces us to reflect on our higher purpose and on the meaning of life.
- ③ As we step into the unknown, we learn to surrender to the Divine will.
- ③ Every illness has a spiritual component and our spirit guides can be of great assistance to us.
- ③ Most healing happens in the invisible realms.

# To recap: if you wish to confront the Demon of Fear...

- ◎ Fear less.
- ◎ Trust more.
- ◎ Believe that all is well.
- ◎ Stay in the present moment.
- ◎ Refill with joy!



# If you wish to help

- ⦿ Prayer (especially to Kateri Tekakwitha), positive visualization, meditation, etc. for Lucie.
- ⦿ Her email address is [lbrunet@hawk.igs.net](mailto:lbrunet@hawk.igs.net)
- ⦿ Donate to the ALS Society of Ontario that provides expensive equipment to ALS patients (Contact the ALS Society in Ottawa).
- ⦿ Volunteer to help families of patients with ALS or other neurological illnesses.