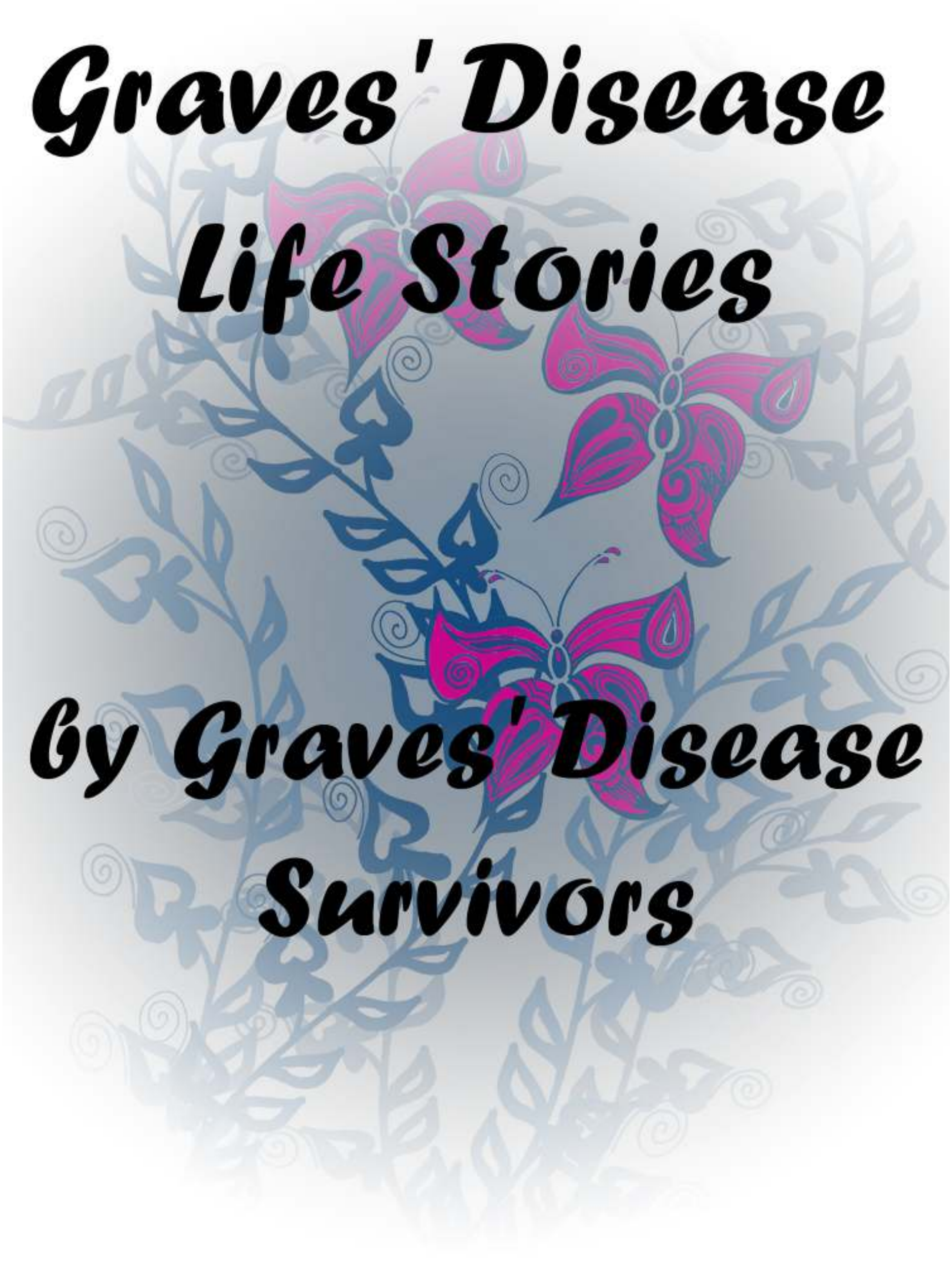
Graves' Disease
Life Stories



by Graves' Disease
Survivors

Book covers and butterflies inside by:

Eva Razborsek is an architect, designer and ornamental artist from Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia (Central Europe).

She enjoys drawing, painting and designing, especially greeting cards. Lately she created a collection of butterfly designs. She also has Graves' disease and hyperthyroidism. Unfortunately she had RAI before she found out about Svetla and her work.

Thank you for choosing my drawing for the cover of this precious book!

Eva R.

"What we call the beginning is often the end.

And to make an end is to make a beginning.

The end is where we start from."

"Where is the Life

We have lost in living?

Where is the wisdom

We have lost in knowledge?

Where is the knowledge

We have lost in information?

Tomas S. Eliot

This book is created by people suffering from Graves' Disease or Hyperthyroidism. All the stories, the poem and the pictures are donation from all these people, who want to help the others, suffering from Graves' Disease or Hyperthyroidism.

The book is dedicated to 136 000 people who are diagnosed with hyperthyroidism every year, only in USA. 11, 333 every month. 372 people every day only in USA will hear this diagnose. One in 89 people worldwide will get sick with Graves' Disease.

This book is dedicated to all of them!

Thank you ALL! Without you, this book could not be created.

All the stories are unedited- I wanted them to be authentic. These are real stories from real people. None of the people in this book is a professional writer, and all the stories are true, to the best of my knowledge.

Speaking the truth is always the psychological problem of the people, who have this disease, including myself. When I learned to speak the truth, this was my starting point of healing. I hope that this will pertain to everyone who dared to speak the truth in this book.

There are 32 stories, chosen to represent people from 5 different continents- Europe, Africa, Australia, New Zealand and North America.

The writers' experience in this book is priceless. They share everything that helped them to battle the disease. Please, use your own judgment and consult your doctor first, if you decide to try anything, shared in this book. It may not be applicable for you or your condition.

The weblinks in the stories with additional information are clickable.

The beautiful butterfly was always a symbol of our thyroid- that's why it was chosen for the cover of the book.

Enjoy!

Disclaimer

The material in this book is provided for educational and informational purposes only, and is not intended to be a substitute for a health care provider's consultation. Please consult your physician or appropriate health care provider about the applicability of any opinions or recommendations with respect to your own symptoms or medical conditions. The web site and authors shall have neither liability nor responsibility to any person or entity with respect to any loss, damage, or injury caused or alleged to be caused directly or indirectly by the information contained in this ebook or website.

Content

Content

Graves' Disease Shadows

The shadow of Graves' Disease has been my dear companion for the past 6 years. I'll not go in details about my actual Graves' disease story since I already have a book, or books, that explain my journey- "Life Manual for Graves' Disease and Hyperthyroidism", "Thyroid Eye Disease and Its Healing", "Ultimate Diet for Graves' Disease and Hyperthyroidism" and "Life Balance Manual for Graves' Disease".

In 2003, after almost a year battling Graves' Disease I was pronounced "cured" by the doctors.

What I want to write about now is about the years following my recovery from Graves' disease.

Soon after I was pronounced by doctors "euthyroid" and "cured", I realized that it's not over and will never be. Even though I didn't have any of the symptoms any more- my eyes became normal again, no palpitations, I was able to sleep, my period was back, I didn't have muscle cramps, my eyes were not bulging- somewhere, deep in my heart I realized that the story is not over, and will never be- until I am alive.

Even though I have learned my lessons and was trying to live a stress-free life- sometimes I'll lose a track of what's going on and get back again in similar situations as before. Probably this was because of my personal character, or just because I don't know how to be something different, but a "super woman".

The idea for creating a book and a website came accidentally. As you know, Graves' Disease is considered incurable. I looked and felt terrible, as many of you. Many people knowing me from before and during my illness- friends, relatives and even doctors will come to me and say:

"I can't believe that you recovered and there are no signs of your disease- your eyes look perfectly normal!"

I started to realize that my experience and what I knew may help other people, suffering from the same condition. I didn't know if what I have discovered from my experience will help others as well. I've never been an author, or I never wrote a book (except for a few articles for newspapers and magazines). But I decided to give it a try. It was a new process of learning things that I never knew before- how to write, how to put a website together, how to hire people to do that for me later, how to publish this website on the web and how to make people find my website (which was most the difficult and expensive thing).

Many tears accompanied this process and many sleepless nights. Finally- it was done and many people could see and read what I knew.

Now came the other question- is this applicable for all the sufferers from Graves' disease? Is it helpful? There was no answer back then. Only the time would show if I was right or wrong.

First emails from the people confirmed that I was right- my system was working. Of course- not for everyone- people are different, they live in a different environment, married or not, with children or not, young, old, males and females. Sometimes I will get very nasty emails, bitter words that will make me cry. But I understand how emotional this could be for some people, especially if they suffer from Graves' Disease.

Other times I will get emails saying that my system doesn't work- and I believe mainly because the people did not do what I suggested, or because it was too late- after RAI treatment or surgery. But most of the emails I received are from people, whom I helped somehow- one or another way. That was the only thing that made me keep doing what I am doing. And I'll never regret that. So, 6 years later, I have 4 books on the subject, trying to cover every little aspect of the disease and how to deal with it.

By writing these books I learned a lot, much more than I knew before. It was a school for me, where I still study, even today. And I am grateful to all the people, that shared with me their experience, gave me a feedback, told me new methods and ways of coping with Graves' Disease. I am grateful to all of you.

My life now is very different from what it was 6 years ago. Back then, in 2003, I quit my 9-5 job once and I hope forever. Now I have more time to do what I love, and most of all- to do all these things slowly and consciously. Of course, I was doing the same things before, but in a completely different manner. Today, I'll cook with pleasure (when I want to) and I'll do the chores that every woman does- slower, in my pace and I'll pay more attention to all the details. I live here and now. If I clean the house, this is what I do, if I write a report, or prepare the program for my students, or help my daughter with homework- this is what I do, nothing else. I try to be present.

What disappeared from my life was the rush, the stress, and multitasking, the frustration, the feeling of being overwhelmed, the guilt that I am not doing "everything" and "perfect"- and that everything should be in my control.

Once I started to live in the above manner, the God and Universe started to take care of me too- new opportunities arrived, new work- related proposals showed up (where for less hours I was doing pleasant things and on the top got paid for that). I started to teach workshops and trainings for different groups of people, I continued to write my books about Graves' Disease, I was offered the job of Executive Director of the same school I graduated 10 years ago. I re-established my private practice in psychotherapy and life coaching. And even though I didn't know, and I still don't, what check I'll get at the end of the month and if I'll be able to pay my mortgage or not and that practically I am leaving in a sort of financial insecurity (probably as many of you) – deep in my heart I know, that no matter what happens – I'll make it. I know that there is a higher force in the Universe that will take care of me as long as I am true to myself and take care of me. Because, if I am sick, I can't use any opportunities that will open for me- and nobody from my family will benefit from that either. For now- for these 6 years, this Higher Force never betrayed me.

Today I am not free tensions, problems or daily cares. Managing an Institute for psychotherapists and written many books I'm seen by many people as famous and successful. But measured by the ambitions of my youth I am a failure. My aspirations have not been realized, the dreams of my youth have not materialized. I am still an imperfect creature. I sit on no Olympian heights. My books are not best sellers, my practice is not big, even the Institute I am managing is suffering from the economic recession. However pain is not absent either.

But I have consistent pleasure in my life and my work.

The big change in my life occurred some years ago when I accepted my failure- when I got sick with Graves' Disease. Since then I gained a peace of mind, inner contentment and some wisdom. Part of that wisdom is the realization that success and failure are not valid criteria for living. Both are just part of the journey, called Life.

Failure, no matter in what form, always had a positive effect on me. It has been my best teacher, even though the experience itself is not pleasant at all. It made me stop and look at my self- destructive behavior. It enabled me to make a fresh start, with all the enthusiasm of a new beginning. It helped me to learn from my mistakes and to be where I am right now.

And there is no better place I want to be right now, but here- with all of you, 32 people in this book, who share their experience to help all the others in the world, diagnosed with Graves' Disease or Hyperthyroidism.

I love you.

Svetla Bankova

Graves' Disease-My story- by Juliette Lachemeier, Tropical North Queensland, Australia

My name is Juliette Lachemeier and I'm 38 years old. I'm a Clinical Nutritionist who specializes in Homotoxicology, Vibrational Medicine, Clinical Infertility and Pathology. I live in tropical North Queensland, Australia with my husband, seven year old beautiful daughter and 2 year old fluffy black cat. I work as a Clinical Nutritionist for Go Vita Smithfield and can be contacted via email at govita@regenhealth.com.au. I use a technology called VoiceBio Analysis as part of my consultations, which is fascinating in itself www.voicebio.com . I also utilize Bio Impedence Analysis (Body Composition monitoring) and specialize in pathology utilizing PathLab and ARL Reference Laboratories. I work in conjunction with an Integrative Medical Doctor by the name of Dr Russell D'Scarlett in developing treatment protocols and in managing the health and well-being of my patients, as I firmly believe that both natural and conventional medicine need to work together to bring about recovery and successful treatment outcomes. Nearly every second person who comes through my door has an auto-immune thyroid disease and almost all of these are women. In this chapter I will share with you my own personal journey through Graves' disease, and will give some insight into how to prevent and work with it. You are not alone, even though at times it will seem like no one understands where you are coming from or what you are going through.

My name is Juliette Lachemeier and I'm 38 years old. I'm a Clinical Nutritionist who specializes in Homotoxicology, Vibrational Medicine, Clinical Infertility and Pathology. Nearly every second person who comes through my door has an auto-immune thyroid disease and almost all of these are women. In this chapter I will share with you my own personal journey through Graves' disease, and will give some insight into how to prevent and work with it. You are not alone, even though at times it will seem like no one understands where you are coming from or what you are going through.

My own personal sojourn into the world of Graves Disease was particularly vicious and completely out of the blue. It happened a couple of months after my 35th birthday and turned both mine and my family's world upside down. Prior to this I had been full of energy and rarely ill. We consumed all organic, wholesome food at home, used no chemicals on or in anything and were what most people would consider the epitome of health. Even though my profession was in Economics, Commerce, Law and Senior Human Resource Management & Training, I had given this up after the birth of my daughter Kahliya in 2002.

Only after 18 months of being a full time mother did I return part time to work, albeit in a teaching capacity. Even though I looked after myself very well physically, I failed to take into account the sheer amount of stress in my life that was present for years on end, and just kept trying to power on through and keep up with the constant 24 hour a day, 7 day a week demands on my time, soul and body. This came in the form of being on the go from before 5am until well past 10pm at night, juggling work, a young daughter, being a wife, running a household, keeping everyone healthy and studying Clinical Nutrition plus Vibrational Medicine.

From the minute I awoke to almost the time I went to bed (apart from the studying, which was my passion) all of my energy and attention went into other people and how I might best meet their needs. There was virtually nothing left for myself - no time to meditate, paint, get into the stillness of nature, dance or just spend time around myself with no one else there. When you have a baby and young child with no family around to help - my days just seemed to be reduced to making sure I had the energy to actually get through each day and do everything that was required to keep things running smoothly on a practical and survival level.

Part of me knew I wasn't coping as well as I tried to make out I was as I began to have anxiety attacks where I just couldn't move - I was so overwhelmed by everything that needed to be done…and I actually didn't feel like doing ANY of it. But I would push this aside and go back to being super woman at high speed, as I thought there was no other option. I couldn't stop working as my income was necessary for our family to survive and I couldn't just quit being a mother and a partner. The household wasn't going to run itself - so I just put up with it (with a healthy dose of anger and resentment thrown in some of the time) until my body just gave out.

In January 2007, I came down with what appeared to be an awful flu. Despite now being and working in the field of nutrition, I couldn't get rid of it. Instead of improving, I just got worse and worse. I also noticed I was shaking, extremely hungry and my eyes hurt like hell. As we live in Tropical North Queensland, I thought I'd maybe contracted Dengue or Ross River so went to a doctor to be tested for it. This visit saved my life.

I did not have Dengue, but was in the grip of a thyroid storm with FT3 levels > 112 (2.3 -6.8), FT4 69 (10-20) and TSH <.01. My TRAB levels were 43 (<1). These are the antibodies that drive Graves' disease. The next day I was rushed to hospital as I had a resting heart rate of 190bpm, severe chest pain, breathlessness and disorientation. Just before total heart failure, going into a coma and quite possibly dying. I was put on 12 Neomercazole and 6 Propanalol plus IV daily.

It was four months before I could return to work (and then only 6-9 hours per week) as my heart was so badly damaged that I couldn't speak without gasping for breath. I also had all the effects of thyrotoxicosis which are extremely detrimental on every level of the body and mind.

The thyroid regulates and affects the functioning of all organs and systems in the body from the muscles to the heart, brain, nervous system, cells, digestive system, metabolism etc. Hyperthyroidism speeds everything up and if not treated can and will cause death. It is not a disease to be messed around with. Even though I am trained in nutritional medicine and like to use natural approaches to health wherever possible, this disease can NOT be treated solely with nutritional approaches. It is too dangerous. Anti thyroid medication MUST be used until natural methods are able (if possible) to bring the disease into remission. Many of my patients with GD are totally unaware just how serious it is and how it affects the body. They come in wanting me to help them with just nutritionals and are often shocked when I refuse and make it known in no uncertain terms that they must stay on their anti thyroid meds until I can see their TRAB is <1. There is much that be done in conjunction with controlling the disease with Neomercazole or PTU however, but this is practically a book in itself, although I will touch on it a little.

In my case, through using nutritional approaches as well as Neomercazole, I was able to return to a relatively normal life and build up a successful practice working 4 days a week. However, the first year after the onset of the thyroid storm was one of worst in my life and many times I wished I had just died. What it did to my nervous system with the feeling that I couldn't cope, was irritable, irrational, anxious and would fly off the handle at the smallest of things, my body and my eyes was almost too much to live with. I couldn't even bear to look in the mirror as some stranger stared back at me with the staring, bulging eyes of a what appeared to be a deranged mental person. I hid them constantly behind glasses.

Unless you go through this disease yourself, no one understands what it does to you on so many levels. Even if you are an experienced meditator (which I was) the effect on your nervous system is such that you cannot even use these techniques to calm yourself down and disassociate from the whole thing. I lost myself on every level and had no idea who this person was that I was replaced with. The effect on my husband and daughter was also terrible and I felt so guilty that they had to suffer along with me, even though they weren't physically affected themselves. Plus my lack of income whilst recovering and building myself up put us into a huge amount of debt that we have still not recovered from.

God, I HATED this disease and everything about it.

After about two years, I was able to bring my TRAB levels down from 43 to 1.4. Remission is when they are <1 and was only taking 1 Neomercazole per day. However, my white blood cell count started to become low and it became difficult to fight infections. This can be unfortunate side effect of the Neomercazole. I tried taking only 1 tablet every 3-4 days, but immediately developed thyrotoxicosis again. My WBC would normalize but my thyroid hormone levels would go up. I also had a toxic multinodular goitre and autonomous toxic nodules throughout the thyroid that produced their own hormone, so Graves' Disease was not the only issue I had to contend with. After 6 months or so on this rollercoaster of alternating thyrotoxicosis and low WBC I made the decision to have a total thyroidectomy. In my case, it was the only solution out of the nightmare that had become my life.

I was terrified of the surgery itself due to the thyroid's proximity to the recurrent laryngeal nerves and parathyroid glands, not to mention the major operation it was in itself. But I found a very skilled and most wonderful surgeon who performed it for me (who I'll be forever grateful to) and despite it being very unpleasant to recover from, the operation itself was a huge success with no damage to my voice or parathyroids.

There was no post operative infection or problems either. If you do require a thyroidectomy due to GD, it is vital that you choose a skilled surgeon who performs at least 20 - 30 per year. The damage from the operation (if there is any) is irreversible. We paid for it ourselves as we didn't have private hospital cover and even though it cost us thousands of dollars, it was well worth it.

I have to tell you, I was soooo relieved and almost ecstatic to not have to live with Graves' Disease any longer. My eyes have almost gone back to normal too!!! After the operation I started on thyroid hormone (like Armour) from the most reputable compounding pharmacy here in Australia (or so I thought).

With everything I had read and studied I believed this was preferable over Thyroxine. However, life again had other ideas for me and this time it was again almost as fatal as the thyroid storm. Unknown to me, desiccated thyroid production is not regulated in Australia and the hormone I was taking was actually putting nothing into my body. And without thyroid hormone, your body and brain shuts down and dies.

I thought the way I'd started to feel was just the continued recovery from the thyroidectomy, juggling 14 hour days managing back to back patients and a family, plus having a cold/flu again. Thyroid hormone levels are checked only every six weeks after thryoidectomy and it was around the time of my second blood test being due, so I scribbled the thyroid function tests onto a pathology slip that was for iron studies and a FBC, and just hoped they checked it.

By this time I was feeling like I could go to sleep and not wake up, plus I felt like I shouldn't be driving as I didn't feel that I was fully cognizant at all times. But I put it down to the flu/cold I had etc. I got the shock of my life when 2 days later my TSH came back at 160 (0.4 -2) and t3 and t4 levels were almost nonexistent!!!

My doctor thought there must be some mistake as I was taking a high dose of desiccated thyroid, and we immediately repeated the test. That came back even worse as the TSH had risen to 170 and t4 had dropped again in that 2 days.

Over the weekend, I started to deteriorate rapidly and lost the ability to walk without falling over, lost the feeling in my arms and legs. couldn't think where letters even came in the alphabet and had awful chest pain. My surgeon and the endocrinologist at Cairns Base Hospital rushed me to hospital immediately after seeing those results and I was started on a very high dose of Thyroxine (which I will stay on as I'll never trust dessicated thyroid again). That was four weeks ago, and I am still recovering very slowly after being so severely hypothyroid. My brain function is returning and I can walk most of the time without falling over, but I do need a walking stick. The worst things are my muscles as the muscle fibers have disintegrated and atrophied, so I am in a lot of pain most of the time. This will take months to heal, if it's possible for them to fully recover.

But I do have hope. I had a visit from God in hospital in the form of Sri Sathya Sai Baba (Indian Divine Incarnation) when I was in and out of consciousness. This is a miracle, and I know this. He told me I'd be looked after and then directed me towards a form of Ayruvedic healing using divine Sanjeevinis. Then I was contacted by an Svetla in America to help co-author a book on Graves' Disease, to help others who have it. I have much to contribute to this, in the way of my own personal experience plus my clinical knowledge and treatment of it.

Even though my own path is very harrowing at the moment and the stress on my family is huge, I know there is a higher purpose to everything. One of my patients yesterday also went out of her way to track me down at home, just to tell me that my diagnosis of her condition saved her life at the last minute (just a couple of weeks ago she needed immediate surgery), when not even heart specialists and other medical 'experts' picked up what I did. Isn't that amazing?

I know I'm going to be a very powerful healing force in this world. I've been told this many times, that even I can't imagine how I will be able to help people. It's my purpose here. Even though I really wish I did not need to be going through this current hell (plus the last 2.5 years of it) to achieve this. But my faith is being restored in a higher vision for me, rather than feeling like a victim and that the whole universe has been conspiring against me for the last couple of years. Because I did feel abandoned by all things spiritual.

For over 15 years I had devoted myself to A Course In Miracles, had practiced and studied Tibetan Buddhism, the ancient sutras of Patanjali, Yoga, meditation and had given my all to living a life as balanced and as health conscious as I possibly could on every level of being, from the physical through to the emotional, mental and spiritual. I had been able to do this quite successfully until I became a mother, and the pressure to maintain this and do everything for the highest good of my daughter, husband and myself from the physical through to the spiritual was just so overwhelming. As well as keep up with work, study and household demands. I would have been better off just sometimes having takeaway instead of feeling like I couldn't give this to my family and had to stand there despite being exhausted and put together nutritionally balanced, organic meals every day and night ad infinitum! Plus I felt guilty if I left Kahliya to watch some ABC Kids on television for half an hour instead of providing her with other activities myself, despite feeling like I just couldn't give any more of myself at that time. Because I had spent so many years of my life becoming aware of all that was 'needed' to bring about health and balance on every level of being, I felt I had to aspire to this and live like this and raise my child from this awareness, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This is not humanly possible for one woman. But I really believed I was letting everyone down, including God, if I didn't be this utter perfectionist who put 350% of myself into everything I did. No one was more shocked than me with the onset of this disease, and the course it took. After I had been so 'perfect' and spiritual and giving (although I somehow left myself out of equation most of the time and gave everything I had to everyone else). I really believed that God, the Holy Spirit, Jesus - whoever, was going to help me cure this disease, along with all the nutritional approaches and knowledge I had and put into practice. And it didn't happen. I was devastated. But I realize now that I have a very particular path to walk with respect to all of this and I can use my experience on all levels to reach and help others - even if the outcome for myself was not the one I had envisaged personally. I now have a new found feeling of inner peace and healing and my connection to the universe or God or whatever you may call it, has become infinitely stronger.

To those of you who are waging your own battle with Graves' disease, take heart, as all is not hopeless. If I can survive nearly losing my life twice to thyroid complications, so to can you come out of this disease and use what you have learned to help others as well as yourself.

Even though it is beyond the scope of this book for me to go into detail about the biochemistry of the disease, I will remind you that Graves' Disease is primarily a STRESS related condition. Stress will drive cortisol levels to skew your immune system towards what is known as a TH2 immune system rigidity with increased levels of cytokines IL4 and 5 as well as IL 17. Stress and increased cortisol will also result in a condition known as estrogen dominance as cortisol will block progesterone at a cell receptor site level. Too much estradiol (a form of estrogen) is well known for suppressing the CD8 or T suppressor cells of the immune system, which causes it to lose control of its B lymphocytes, the antibodies responsible for the autoimmunity in GD. Stress also causes leaky gut syndrome and the formation of immune complexes in the blood that also contribute to an overactive immune system. Natural therapies and detoxification protocols as well as hormone re-balancing are the means by which this can be brought back into balance.

Lastly, on a spiritual level, GD can be seen as a denial of the true feminine energy, and the failure to listen to what it is telling you. As women, it is not our role to put everyone's needs ahead of our own, at the expense of what is important to nourishing ourselves. The rise of the divine feminine within us demands that we vocalize and meet our needs as well as be there for others.

Most women, myself included, have not honored or given voice to what we need to be whole, fulfilled and happy. The throat chakra governs the thyroid and this all to do with communication and expression. It is no longer enough that we are forced or force ourselves to be everything to everyone (whether we have families or not) while our own souls and what makes us happy are pushed into the background as though we don't matter.

We DO matter, and our energies are changing and quickening and what may have been an acceptable female role in the past is no longer applicable now. Nor do we need to attack ourselves because we feel guilty that we don't want to be what our mother's were or feel that we want something different for ourselves. The divine feminine is awakening and she will be heard. She will bring power and balance to an outdated, oppressive masculine view of the world and show us the meaning of what it truly means to nurture - ourselves included.

God Bless you on your journey to the truth of yourself so that you may then extend it to others and be a light unto the world.

You are not alone.

"Due to Juliette's both personal and professional knowledge of Graves Disease as well as the inspiration from her many patients, she is in the process of writing her own E book detailing all of her clinical knowledge and protocols in working with and preventing the disease. This will be a thoroughly comprehensive insight that provides much needed education on a multitude of levels, integrating the medical, anatomical, clinical, natural, emotional, mental, spiritual and personal approaches to the disease, by someone who has walked the path with you and who can relate to and understand you in a way that most practitioners cannot."

My Graves' Story- by Valerie Harper

Valerie Harper age 32, is a single mother of two children residing in Phoenix AZ. She is an intuitive consultant and teaches classes on a wide variety of topics to inspire personal success, inner clarity and emotional peace. For more information you can visit www.ValerieHarperMountainLotus.com

My thyroid became over active after giving birth to my first child at age 25. Early symptoms of hyperthyroidism were revealing themselves two years prior my diagnosis. It wasn't diagnosed until I was 26.

I was always struggling to maintain emotional equilibrium in a variety of areas of my life especially in romantic relationships. At the time when the hormonal imbalance began to surface I had reached an emotional saturation point of feeling overwhelmed, isolated and disappointed in both my marriage and my life. I felt disconnected from my heart and suppressed whatever feelings I could just to try to cope with everyday life. My mind was overactive with thoughts of stress, worry and sadness. I couldn't seem to communicate my feelings in an articulate enough way to make the pain and loneliness be heard in order to make it go away. I felt my efforts to be a good person and to do the right thing went unnoticed and instead I was taken advantage of in many ways in romantic partnerships.

I see now that I had an unconscious belief that I wasn't going to be loved unless I was ultra responsible and could make people happy. I focused on everyone else's needs except for my own. At the time I was around very toxic people who were unsupportive and negative. Needless to say I didn't know how to take care of my own needs. I was exhausted but continually persisted to accomplish more and more in attempt to overcompensate for the deep underlying feeling that I was not enough.

My boundaries and actions conveyed I didn't need help. Asking for what I needed and wanted was what I feared most. Speaking up for myself resulted in being shut down, invalidated and ridiculed or being completely ignored to the point that I didn't exist. Communication became challenging for me and I chose not to speak and internalized the belief that nothing I say or do matters.

During the first year before I actually had Graves’, I experienced holding in several feelings on a daily basis. I felt lonely, unloved and really angry. I could feel the sadness well up and I would want to cry but the tears felt pointless. I would rub my throat because there would be this tight feeling as it feels when tears well up but you old them in. My throat hurt, I was so tired and there was no reprieve from all the responsibility and burdens to rest or heal.

A year after my first child was born was when I developed a substantial sized goiter and my eyes bulged. In three months my eyes went from looking normal to full blown eyes bursting out of their sockets. I didn’t deal with it because I thought it would just go away. My entire life I had been an incredible athlete and in extreme shape. I had always pushed my body to be stronger yet it came very natural to me. Being in such great physical health I never would’ve thought my health would diminish especially at such a young age.

All illnesses have an emotional root as well as many other factors. Poor nutrition, insufficient sleep, burning the candle at both ends and suppressing my true feelings led to a road to recovery and a journey that has lasted almost a decade. This disease has made me more aware of my limitations, my need for love, self respect and how if you give everything you have to others and leave nothing for yourself you eventually run out.

My energy reserves can be depleted quickly when I over give of my time, energy and resources. This awareness has led me to asking for more of what I need and to evaluate the value of exchange in my relationships with friends, relative and partnerships. As I grew more aware of imbalance of give and take I became angry but I didn't do anything about it. I was trying to seek approval from people who would never give it no matter how much I gave.

Asking for what I need and want still brings up fear of rejection but I no longer choose to maintain connections with people who don’t value me for who I am. I carried the belief for a long time that to ask for what I need meant I was weak or would ensure I would never get it. Replacing old beliefs have allowed me to rest, renew and heal.

I don’t feel it is a coincidence that my body produces antibodies against my thyroid. I feel it only makes sense. I am very critical of myself. I hold myself back in so many ways and in my mind I feel I never communicate good enough. The negative self talk is enough to make me feel bad. The more I improve my relationship with myself, the more I find I am healing.

My thyroid has become my greatest ally in life. It improves when I listen and trust myself. When my hormone levels increase I know I need to clear the air of feelings and built up emotions. When my thyroid production decreases in activity I know my feelings aren't backing up and I am using my energy in an efficient and creative ways that bring me joy.

I use my environment to help me maintain good health. When my house gets cluttered I know I am not dealing with something and use it as an indicator to tune in and address what I am avoiding in my life.

I also choose to only be around people who are healthy emotionally as much as possible. Having thyroid sensitivity has made me aware of how I intuitively pick up on the energy of those around me. If I am around toxic people or a lot of emotional energy of others, my thyroid will activated and produce more hormones.

I have been able to improve the autoimmune aspects by feeling less anxious and less threatened in life. As I have built up better boundaries I notice my immune system isn't so hyper vigilant and fearful which not only feels better but I notice my thyroid hormone levels decrease too.

I can't help but think by learning to feel safe with all that I feel that one day it will all go away, no longer need medication and that all will be restored to a state of balance. Healing my thyroid is an intention I work with daily. I am in the best stage of my healing. Svetla Bankova's books have been an inspiration and have helped a lot.

I embrace everything that helps me maintain inner balance from expression, learning to deal with emotions rather than allowing them to fester, meditation, trusting myself, taking care of my needs and using western medicine. I am firmly grounded in eastern medicine however western medicine works better for me with this than herbs or any gentle approach. Eastern medicine helps support what western medicine maintains.

I can get discouraged when I get a new doctor or have medical procedures done because they are so fear based. Even when I am doing better they are still gloom and doom because they don't believe the thyroid can and will heal. I am convinced this disease thrives on fear. The safer I can feel the better my body does.

I've chosen a different route with my health. I cannot bring myself to ablate this wonderful glad that is only trying to help me. Somehow my wires got crossed and my body reacts as though this is the enemy but when I look at how it parallels my feelings towards myself it only makes sense. As I evaluate how thoughts and emotions trigger neuropeptide responses from the brain to the organs and glands in the body I can see how interconnected they all are to the symptoms of this disease.

Healing limited beliefs and misperceptions have been what has lead to me the level of healing I have already experienced. I am in the best place ever in my healing even though I feel that there is more work to do. Just because medication helps me maintain thyroid hormonal balance doesn’t mean I’m done and I don’t have to think about it anymore. As much as I wish I didn’t have a hyperthyroid I appreciate the challenge of aligning to my bodies wisdom. Every improvement made with my health is interconnected to the healing and improvement of outer aspects of my life.

GRATITUDE FOR GRAVES'- by Bernadette Kelly, Australia

I am extremely grateful for my Graves' Disease. The process required to heal the disease has brought positive implications to every area of my life and love. Wonderful changes that I may never have discovered or implemented, without a Graves' diagnosis, are now defining my beautiful life.

It all began a couple of months before Christmas in 2005, when my third child, Taya, had just turned one. For a while I thought the insomnia was just par for the course. After all, I was a busy 35 year old woman combining the vocations of mother, wife, chef, friend, cleaner, councilor, laundry maid (with three bed-wetters), shoulder to vent on, part-time book-keeper, and taxi driver. Everyone knows that kids waking you through the night will mess with your sleeping patterns! I told myself to deal with the insomnia and get on with my fulfilling life. Everybody else seemed to be handling their busy, sleep deprived lives as parents, so I would too.

When the old fall-backs like counting each long, slow breath didn't work, I took to reading rather than lying wastefully awake. But then the hand shaking began, which made reading rather tricky. After several weeks of itching skin, hot flushes and listening to my heart pounding in my ears for many hours each night, I finally decided there must be something wrong with me. By now I was struggling to concentrate during the day, my memory was failing, and I felt teary almost all the time. I took myself off to the GP.

I was frightened he was going to tell me I had Depression so I insisted that it must be some kind of virus: " I am usually a happy person, my kids are all healthy, I adore my wonderful husband, everything is right in my world – PLEASE don't tell me I'm depressed!"

The Graves' diagnosis was swift. Beta-blockers, Neo-mercazole and Sleeping pills got me through the busy Christmas season in a zombie-like state. I wanted to get off the pharmaceuticals and heal myself naturally. I had only ever experienced minor ailments in the past and these had always resolved with the help of a naturopath. But I knew I had to stay on the drugs for the safety of my heart. My decision making skills were absent, and Graves' Disease websites served to frighten and confuse me in that early acute phase. I remained in fear and limbo until a true friend guided me to the wonderful Dr Karen Coates.

Karen soothed my fears and told stories of transient over-active thyroids that resolved themselves quickly. She guided me on an integrative path of herbs and slowly weaned me off the neo-mercazole, as indicated by regular thyroid hormone blood tests.

She asked me about my diet and I said it was very good. Ha! I had myself convinced that just because I didn't drink or smoke or eat tons of junk food, that I had a super healthy diet.

After a slow and gradual improvement of thyroid hormone levels over 6 months, Karen decided to test for food allergies. I immediately and religiously removed all offending foods from my diet, including chocolate which had been a life long addiction! Within 2 short weeks a blood test revealed that all my thyroid hormone levels had balanced back into the normal, safe range !

I was, of course, thrilled and immediately told myself and anyone who would listen, that I was healed. My Graves' Disease was all about the food allergies and as long as I stuck to the restricted diet, I'd be fine! I launched straight back into busy mode – you know the stuff that people who never learned how to say no do:

*volunteering at school
*answering every phone call
*saying "I'm fine" to any offers of help
*doing the lion's share of the house work, the nagging and the maintenance of the entire family's social and extra-curricular calendars
*looking after extra kids
*saying yes to every invitation

Everyone else seemed to be managing all of the above without getting some embarrassing "speeding up" disease, so I would too.

Gradually, the forbidden foods began to creep back into my diet. I mean who can stay off chocolate forever? It was organic dark chocolate after all, and every busy mother of three needs a pick-me-up in the afternoons, don't they?

Surprise, surprise – the Graves' symptoms returned. Back on the neo-mercazole and the emotional, exhausted roller coaster. This time Graves' was accompanied by very low adrenal hormone production and pre-mature ovarian failure. I was 37 years old.

I knew intuitively that I must make big changes in order to be free of this whole endocrine system imbalance. It had to be more than just dietary changes this time, and I needed to stay on the diet one hundred percent of the time. However, I completely lacked the mental and emotional clarity to put any substantial plan into action. The sleep deprivation itself made it difficult to think straight at all, let alone implement a massive lifestyle change.

I couldn't ask for help because that would be admitting that I wasn't capable, organized, efficient and in control. It would be admitting that I couldn't be happy, sunny, radiant and everybody's best friend, confidant and councilor, all at the same time.

It would be admitting that I WASN'T PERFECT !

My Graves' body was in a dis-eased state. It was far from 'at ease'. I believe many people are running around today 'not at ease' in their bodies. Those of us with a Graves' diagnosis are the lucky ones. We MUST SLOW DOWN, and make healthful dietary changes, in order to bring our bodies back into 'ease'. We have no choice in the matter.

There is no clearer message that one's body is going too fast, than Graves' Disease. Think about it. Speeding up is the literal mechanism of the disease. In order to heal, one MUST slow down. Our bodies will only slow down if our minds and hearts and souls slow down first.

If , like me, you choose to understand these concepts and ***intend*** to make "slow down" changes in your life, that's great. I read all the information. I saw a Naturopath, an Acupuncturist, an Endocrinologist and even a Psychiatrist. I had great ***intention*** to implement the necessary changes in lifestyle; stay off allergenic foods, get some rest every day, go to bed early, meditate, reduce my workload and stress load. If, like me, the intention is there but you ***don't actually do it*** , look forward to your symptoms remaining or periodically recurring for many years to come.

Your diagnosis of Graves' Disease could be your savior. It has been mine. After four long years filled with denial, embarrassment, tears, guilt and great intentions to heal; I am finally at a point where I am extremely grateful that Graves' came my way. The quest to heal and come back into balance has reminded me of who I am. It has set me back on the right path.

Exactly three months ago my massage therapist Thea, asked me ever so gently how I was feeling. Like a damn wall bursting I let go of everything I had been holding just below the surface for the past three and a half years. The combination of her hands on my body and her genuinely heartfelt inquiry into my health, unlocked the door to my grief.

As the tears fell through the little face hole in the massage table I realized how overwhelmed I actually was. How fragile I was. How desperately I needed help. Up until that day I had convinced myself and others that I was doing fine. I wasn't. I was completely exhausted. Thoroughly used up.

I was, in fact, embarrassed and ashamed that I had not managed to heal myself. After all, I had a degree in nutrition and exercise education. I had worked for 5 years (in my early twenties before kids) teaching adults with health concerns how to get back into balance; at a Holistic Health Retreat. While living in at the Retreat and eating whole vegetarian food, I taught tai chi, yoga , stretch and meditation classes. I guided guests on soul searching nature walks. Led "feel the fear and do it anyway" abseils, flying fox rides and super high ropes courses. I supported many people through personal growth seminars which expressed the crucial need to slow down lifestyles, breathe deeply and release emotional baggage into our backyard.

I therefore knew mentally what to do, the moment I was diagnosed with Graves'. Knowing what to do was the easy part. I just didn't seem to be able to do what I knew! I was too tired, indecisive and brain foggy to do what I knew. Thea offered to help in the most practical way. She shopped for me at an organic supermarket, providing all the ingredients for a healing menu plan devoid of my allergenic foods. She loaned me recipes and relevant books. She shared her mental clarity – something I desperately needed. Thea researched Graves', Adrenal Exhaustion and Early Menopause on the net and printed the most useful information for me. Her kindness gave me the shake-up that was needed to start doing what I knew. One hundred percent. Ask for this kind of help from somebody who loves you.

I have not looked back and have never felt better, or more clear about who I am and what I want for the future.

This is what I did:

*Sought out a GP who was open to integrative and alternative medicine.

*Asked for food allergy, adrenal function, ovarian function and heavy metal tests. Carried out my doctor's suggestions following the results of these tests.

*ACTUALLY made it a priority to ingest prescribed herbs and supplements the specified number of times per day.

*ACTUALLY removed all processed foods, refined white foods (white bread, rice, pasta), and caffeine from my diet.

*ACTUALLY started eating mostly organic.

*ACTUALLY stopped eating refined cane sugar, replacing it with small amounts of pure maple syrup, fresh, frozen or stewed fruits and organic fresh dates.

*ACTUALLY reduced my work load: accepted offers of help with washing/folding/ picking up and minding kids. Asked for help when needed and hired a cleaner.

*ACTUALLY stopped volunteer work and excess social and work engagements temporarily (I know you are loaded up with these or you probably wouldn't have Graves' Disease!)

*With the precious time that all of the above freed up, I do some form of gentle exercise each day – whatever I can manage – yoga, walking, swimming. I cycle rather than drive at every opportunity.

****Most important of all*** – I believe with every fiber of my being – that ***daily meditation*** has made all the difference. This has been the key to slowing down and healing my body, mind and soul.

Every day that I meditate on waking, then follow up in the afternoon :

*My heart rate stays calm
*My moods don't swing
*All my relationships flow better
*I remember things
*My concentration is much better
*The world looks and feels like a beautiful place
* I feel with unwavering certainty that I am in the right place at the right time
*I know that I am ok just as I am
*What others think of me is none of my concern
*I am happy
*I remember to be mindful of speeding up- and immediately stop and breathe deeply when I notice it
*I am more present as I interact with my husband and kids

I made the meditation easy and accessible by listening to guided CD's. I loaded them onto my ipod so I could listen without waking my husband. I lie down on my bed so I am super comfy. Sometimes I do a full hour twice a day. Other days I only manage to fit in 15 mins. A consistent daily practice of any time length appears to be the crucial factor.

Within 2 weeks of making all the changes above:

*I felt empowered and self confident for the first time since the Graves' diagnosis three and a half years earlier.
*I still had energy, mental clarity and calm emotions in the late afternoon (I had been reaching for chocolate every half hour just to stay on my feet in the afternoons).
*I slept for 7 hours straight, for the first time in years

*My skin glowed, my hair shone and the deep line between my eyebrows was greatly diminished

Within 6 weeks of making all the changes above:

*My thyroid hormone tests were all at healthy levels
* I had a normal menstrual period for the first time in over a year
* I felt with innate certainty that my endocrine system was healing a little more each day. I still do.
* I bowed gratefully out of the competition for “who’s the busiest”, that so many people are participating in, at this time in our culture.
*I redefined success as being a “wife and mum who is present, calm and happy”
*I devoured numerous positive books and CDs about healing and rebalancing, because my brain was finally clear enough to stay awake and absorb them!

The following books and resources have been the most useful to me in my healing process:

*Shivani Goodman’s Self Healing System.
Most specifically the “Energy Healing Circuit” CD.
Google Shivani Goodman.

*Ian Gawler meditation information.Google Ian Gawler.

Both Shivani and Ian healed themselves of very advanced stage cancers using mind/body medicine. They each returned to radiant health, and devoted the rest of their lives to helping others do the same. Their stories are extremely inspirational. If they can heal third stage ‘terminal’ cancers then we can heal our Graves Disease! Their techniques are simple and have transformed my life.

*’Buddhism for Mothers’ by Sarah Napthali

*’Buddhism for Mothers with Lingering Questions’ by Sarah Napthali

Sarah is a mother of young children and a very wise old soul. Every mother will resonate instantly with her teachings.

*’When I Loved Myself Enough’ by Kim McMillan

I flick this book open onto any page as often as possible. It reminds me instantly of the important things in life.

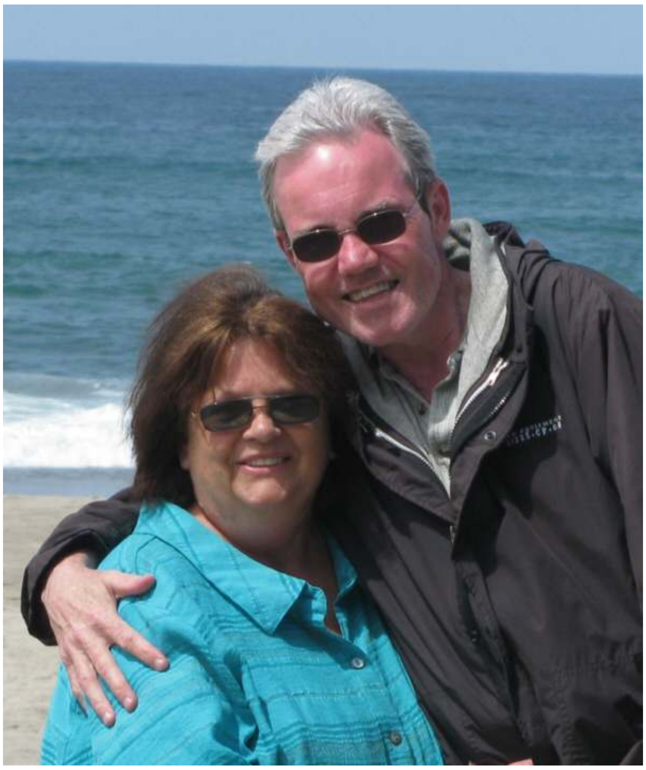
Without Graves Disease I would still be running around trying to please all the people, all the time. I would still be worried about what people would think of me if I ever said no. I would be feeling guilty if I did too much work outside the home. Or I would be feeling guilty if I didn’t do enough work outside the home.

The desire to be healed from Graves’ Disease has forced me onto the incredibly rich life path of self love, self respect and self discipline. All whom I love and all who love me, may only benefit from a slower, calmer, healthier, happier me.

Bernadette Kelly

From Graves' Disease to Hypothyroidism

By Pearl, Canada



Hello, my name is Pearl. I am 56 years old. I live in London, ON Canada, but I am a U.S. citizen. I was born and raised in northern Idaho and moved to Spokane, WA the year I graduated. I have 4 beautiful, wonderful children and 7 awesome grand children. We are a very close knit family. I miss them all very much. I married a Canadian and moved here in April, 2001. This is my Graves Disease story.

Looking back, the whole 'I'm not myself' health issue started in early 1991. My brother suffered from cancer, and all of us were there for him as he wasted away to the horrible disease. He died in April, 1991. I remember going to my doctor, whom I had as my doctor for at least 8 years, for my annual physical check-up. As always, he asked how things were going, and I broke down in his office as I explained what my brother was going through. He listened and took my hand and told me to take care of myself, because traumatic events in our lives can cause physical problems later, when we least expect it. My mother died that same year in July. I wasn't particularly close to my mother, but still, she was my mom, and her death was a shock. The beginning of 1992 I started noticing physical changes. The one that stood out most at the time was jittery legs when I was trying to sleep! I also noticed periods of fatigue when I had to force myself to work and carry on daily activities. My father-in-law, who was just like a dad to me, died in December 1992. I guess the deaths and other things going on in my life started to take their toll.

In mid to late 1993 I was exhausted most of the time, to the point where I would have to sit down on the stairs before continuing to bed or the bathroom, but inside I was jittery and my heart was racing. So I went to the doctor. He admitted he didn't know what was wrong but was pretty sure it was my thyroid. I was waiting in his office for the lab results, which he pushed through as an emergency, and I read a Prevention magazine on iron deficiency anemia. I had 10 of the 15 symptoms, so I went back to his office and asked if he's run a test for anemia He said he wouldn't usually do that for a thyroid issue but I'm the patient & know my body better than anyone. He came out and apologized profusely. My blood count was dangerously low! He put me on time released iron capsules and once a week I had to go in for iron shots. My bottom, after about 3 weeks, was one big bruise! He also made an appointment to see an endocrinologist, Dr. Rubin. She turned out to be my 'life line' as far as the Grave's Disease went.

My moods fluctuated. I would have outbursts that I didn't even remember, but when I 'came to', I could tell by the looks on my loved ones faces that I had just had an episode. I lost 31 pounds in less than 3 weeks, was really hyper, and my heart was in overdrive almost every waking moment. I thought I was going to die. On the funny side of things, I would replace words...like one time we were going to the mall, taking my little granddaughter, and I told my son, "Don't forget Alyssa's toboggan.” meaning stroller, of course. I had days when I couldn't keep my mind on any one thing for more than a few minutes at a time, which is so unlike me, because I am an organized, 'have to finish this project first' type person.

Dr. Rubin put me on 'the purple pill', which was a hormone stabilizer, which helped a lot. My kids got so they would ask, "Mom, did you take your purple pill?" She ran the thyroid scan, where you're laying on the narrow table, and the machine goes around the face/neck then back around and side to side, etc.. I remember she told the operator to be sure to tell me when he was going to move the table, because I had a fear of heights and I'm also "thyroidal". We chuckled about it at the time, but the operator, one time only, didn't tell me he was moving the table and I freaked. When I 'came to', poor ole soul was apologizing and felt so bad. I did, too, because I didn't realize I had ‘went off’ the way I did.

Well, sure enough, Grave's Disease. She gave me only the 2 options, because I guess mine was pretty diseased or something, and they were the Radio Active Iodine treatment or surgery. I wish now, knowing what I know, that I had picked the surgery, but I picked RAI instead. I also freaked out when the guy that brings in the capsule walked in fully suited in a space alien suit, head to toe, and the capsule was in some sort of armored case! They had to call Dr. Rubin. She settled me down and explained everything. I just couldn't get the idea that I was going to swallow something that they had carried in using a special armored case and protective suit!

With the RAI and proper dose of Synthroid things seemed to get back to normal, until the Thyroid Eye Disease (TED) started. I started seeing double out of my right eye and it appeared large, like swollen. No one had mentioned this, so I went to my regular eye doctor. He sent me right to Dr. Rubin. She explained THAT part of Grave's Disease. I asked why no one had told me this and what else should I expect!! She said they don't relay a lot of the 'symptoms' or describe what COULD happen next, because most case of Grave's Disease are stress related and 'expecting' further problems sometimes brings them on. I explained my mind and body do not work like that. Let me know what to expect so that I don't worry about stuff if it does happen! She agreed and explained the things that might continue, which have even to this date...they tired/jittery legs, the occasional fatigue, some joint aches, etc..

I had TED in only my right eye, which seemed to pose more complications. I wear glasses, and the eye bulged so much that it touched my lens, so I had to start wearing a 'patch bandage' over my eye under my glasses. That was too painful, so I wore the patch on the outside of my glasses, usually it was the white medical tape, the papery kind. I got pretty artistic with it, and would draw an eye on it or something else, depending on my mood. I worked at an elementary school, and sometimes the children would ask to see it. It was gross. I'd say stuff like, 'Don't make me give you the eye!" It was kind of funny and helped me through that difficult time.

Dr. Rubin put me on steroids for almost a year, but the eye eventually bulged so much that it was close to rendering me blind. So in 1995 I had orbital decompression surgery to relieve the pressure on my eye. It worked! By early 1996 I didn't have to wear the patch. My eye is pretty much back to normal. I do have to have a prism in my lens, though, to adjust the double vision. I don't have full depth perception in that eye and have to close it to go up and down steps. The colors are little off but not enough to cause any problems.

I have read and researched, the past couple years, treated Grave's Disease, what others are experiencing, how one should eat, what else affects it, etc.. I find most general medical doctors are not fully educated in Grave's Disease and still haven't found an endocrinologist that I trust.

I am now in the hypothyroid stage of the disease, have an awful time losing weight, but I am trying and have lost 26 pounds since March this year (September 2009). I still have days of total fatigue, but I make myself get up and move. I put on a happy face and will not let the disease defeat me. I was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, but haven't had a problem for over a year, so my medical doctor is thinking about taking me off the meds. I also have days where every joint in my body aches. Again, I move. Once in awhile, I still 'freak out', as my kids use to say, but the episodes are rare. I used to have panic attacks, anxiety attacks, and yes, fits or anger, but when I found out the reasons and causes, I made up my mind to not let them happen and affect my health to the point of something like Grave's Disease or worse. I haven't learned to meditate yet, but I guess, in my own way, I do. I like to go for long walks and take pictures; that relaxes me. I pray and thank God for my health, my family, the roof over my head...the list goes on and on.

My sister was diagnosed with Grave’s Disease 2 years ago. Hers is being controlled with synthetic thyroid replacement. My oldest daughter was recently diagnosed with Grave’s Disease. She is very health conscience, so she will try her best to control the disease using nature and her own body. I’m pretty sure my mother had Grave’s Disease. She was a hypochondriac but never went to the doctor, just complained a lot. She was fatigued a lot and her legs became really weak. We assumed it was because she never moved out of the recliner, which I’m sure was a lot of it, but just other things makes me believe she had it. I also believe my Grandma had it. The only reason is because of her eyes. She had the classic Grave’s Disease bulge, which I now recognize.

I have 2 pieces of advice...no 3 pieces of advice; make that 4 *lol*:

1. Don't let it get to you; find a way to stay "you".

2. Read and research; Svetla Bankova's books and articles are a great inspiration and source of knowledge. I still rely on her books and articles to see me through, and I highly recommend them.

3. Take care of 'you'. Find a way to stay focused. I sometimes use humor. I love taking pictures and then working on the pictures. Find and do what makes you happy and relaxed.

4. Eat right; stay away for the 'white' foods, overly processed foods. You might be told that what you eat doesn't affect Grave's Disease. It might not directly, but believe me, it does affect you. Don't crash diet; just eat as healthy as possible. Keep moving, even if it's just a run around the house of apartment, which is all I can manage to do some days. Walking is great. You get to see things; it's not particularly demanding on the body. I love it.

The Story from Kenya, East Africa- by Jane M. Mburu

I am from Central Kenya, East Africa and have been sharing my experience with so many people whom I find are still traumatized upon learning about their thyroid status. It's still a wonder because there is such a stigma around here yet, many people especially women keep on being diagnosed day by day.

I came to learn of my thyroid condition in the year 2006 when my baby was only 6 months old. I had a kind of sore throat and thought this is just common cold but it was there for a whole month so I got concerned. I started feeling pain and some swelling developed on my neck. I got concerned and asked some nurses around me what that could be only to get the most shocking news, this is "goiter."

I could not imagine myself with goiter since I had seen I woman in our village who had a big sagging goiter that sag to her chest and she never knew what it was but upon being taken to a hospital which was 10 hours away, she was operated on and came back to the village normal.

We feared meeting with her since to us, it sounded like a bad omen. No one could understand her to many that condition was either a curse from the ancestors or from others since she shared a huge polygamous man and happened to be the youngest wife and very hostile.

Could it be they were mentioning to me such a condition? Had I being bewitched, will I be a bad omen in the society? What really happened to me? Which are the roots of this thyroid condition? I needed intervention.

There are very few Medical Doctors in Kenya so I was booked to see a Physician at the Thika District Hospital. There is only one Physician available and serves other hospitals too so we had to be at the hospital very early and queue in the line. I was sent for my tests and since the hospital laboratory could not diagnose such, I was referred to a National Private Hospital laboratory (Aga Khan University Hospital) which have such facilities.

The challenge we have is the expenses that go with this but finally, I gathered enough money to have my tests done; they cost me around 80 dollars and in Kenya, majority of us live on half a dollar a day. These tests costs I was tested and I was confirmed to be suffering from "Hyperthyroidism."

The next step was to start my medication. I was to start with "Carbimazole" and that meant that I had to cease breastfeeding. This was so stressful for me since I had suffered a Mastitis problem which was so serious and painful when my baby was only a month old and when I was informed to stop breastfeeding, it was still very hard for me to hold. However, after two weeks, I begun the medication. My baby's weight dropped suddenly from 8.9 kg to 8.0 kg. I was getting drained and stressed every time I saw this since to me, this was such a punishment to my little innocent baby but Mama had no choice, she was sick.

As a firm believer in the Christian faith, I trusted God for my healing together with members of the fellowship. We kept praying and hoping that all works out well. The truth is, it just worked. After three weeks, I felt revived again.

Some of the problems I had encountered was loss of weight, fatigue, dizziness, irritability, restlessness; these things vanished by the time I was in my third week of treatment. I knew this was a start and I was supposed to continue but after the next test, I was declared whole. I was healed. I was so joyful and wished I could continue breastfeeding my baby but was not reversible.

When I was diagnosed, I wanted to find out what this graves disease is so, I browsed in the internet and found others who shared what I shared and I felt that I was not all alone. Svetla in particular has been such an inspiration and for the last two years, she has been dropping messages in my inbox encouraging me about this condition and that I can make it in life.

After getting healed, so many other side effects begun attacking my body. My immune system was so low that I have been treated of other illnesses starting from hemorrhoids, sinuses, on a cold season I caught pneumonia, another cold season I caught bronchitis, irregular bleeding, migraines, low blood pressure, dental problems, eye problems, one of my legs developed a big swelling (lymph edema)but which has now subsided; thank God.

Since many people diagnosed with this condition cannot be able to express themselves, I am assisting them to come out of denial and face the real situation as it is. So far, I have five students who are much older than me but who have been unable to cope with this condition. Recently, I encouraged the wife of a renowned Doctor in our City to move on and book for a surgery. I know the more one stays in denial, thinking the Doctors prescription can be untrue is disastrous. One ought to seek help immediately, seek intervention. Get proper medication and even if it will mean going for a surgery, get operated on. It is normal. I found a lady who went through the surgery and has a big scar around her neck.

In our country, many women especially lactating women are suffering from hyperthyroidism. Going for a surgery would be fine for them but they lack enough funds for this. It would be my appeal to our government as well to begin a special kitty just as they have had intervention measures for other diseases like malaria, T.B., HIV/AIDS, Cancer, Renal problems etc, they treat victims of hyperthyroidism with care and have a specific unit set apart for these victims. It is very disturbing to see a victim of Graves' disease hopping from one Doctor who treats other sicknesses and this makes the growth to get more activated.

Those who have tested for thyroid problem should seek medical intervention immediately and get the right Doctors at hand and on my side I can say that hyperthyroidism is treatable and is a normal disease just like the others.

I believe there is intervention for all those who are suffering from hyperthyroidism. Some people had given me options to go for herbal medicine but since no herbalist has been proved to have healed hyperthyroidism, I decided that I will not be their litmus paper to test with. All I needed was to follow the steps to healing, one by one and that is what gave me success.

Svetla has also been instrumental in my healing process; the Lord bless her rich.

Jane M. Mburu
THIKA,
KENYA.

MY THYROID- by Jan Armstrong, Australia

Jan Armstrong is 61 years old and has 3 son. She was born in England and emigrated to Australia in l976. She is a Psychologist and enjoys countryside, riding, yoga, dogs, cinema, reading, drawing, gardening, walking, friends, family, travel, creativity, writing and alternative health.

When I got out of bed one morning nearly 3 years ago, my feet and lower legs felt so stiff and sore I limped off to the bathroom. I thought I'd overdone it at yoga the previous day, but the soreness kept coming morning after morning. It would wear off with activity so that was something. I didn't really think much about it. Just thought it was another sign of my age - 58 at the time.

A few weeks later my eyes became red and puffy like a bad case of hay fever, which I didn't usually get. They didn't settle down well at all. Then other things started to happen. I felt very hot. Even hotter than I normally do in an Australian summer. My arms started to tremble and my heart felt like it was pounding for no particular reason. Most noticeable when I lay in bed at night. Riding my bicycle on the flat left me puffed which was very unusual and I was also losing weight – the only benefit in the whole episode. My husband would probably tell you that I was ratty and irritable, but I wouldn't believe that. Though I do think I was anxious.

I did go and see a cardiologist at this time. I had a year old referral just to have a check up because of heart problems in my family. With my heart knocking away in my chest I thought I should get it checked out. The tests showed that my resting heart rate was 102 beats per minute and his report mentioned significant abnormalities. I'm not sure my GP ever read the report because nothing happened.

One day my GP – where I also worked as a psychologist – noticed that my eyelids were retracted and gave me a blood test. Sure enough. Thyroid problems. It was hyperactive.

I heard the results while away on holiday and had to urgently find a pharmacy where a prescription could be urgently faxed through. I started on one pill of neomercazole p.d. but my GP rang through again and said to up the dose to 6 x p.d. At night I lay awake in a strange bed feeling more than a little scared and wondering if I would live till the morning. A bit melodramatic but all this was rather a shock to someone who prided herself on being fit and healthy.

I am very interested in natural alternative health but nonetheless I went to see an endocrinologist. She sent me off for a nuclear scan which showed I had Graves disease and another scan to see if nodules were likely to be a problem. Fortunately they weren't.

Over the next months, I saw naturopaths, acupuncturists, an anthroposophical doctor and masseur, and read lots on the net. The first naturopath I went to had me tested for allergies, via a live blood test and scratch tests. The theory being that the digestive system needed to be healed before my thyroid could be healed. i.e. a faulty digestive system could be the cause of the problem. I went on a diet which excluded all the things I'd been allergic to.(there wasn't anything greatly obvious) plus, I cut out dairy, alcohol, sugar, coffee etc. All the usual stuff. I didn't find it too hard. There was a lot to be gained. Also there was a whole heap of supplements to take.

Unfortunately this particular naturopath lived quite a way away from me and after a few stuffed up appointments, including driving all the way there to find her missing, I decided to try elsewhere. The second one was recommended by someone at work who had a similar problem, but without the eye troubles. He might have been on the right track, but I didn't gel with him and because he was seriously overweight I didn't feel able to trust his advice.

In the meantime I went to see an eye specialist. In fact I'd been to see him with my hay fever symptoms, and he hadn't picked up my thyroid problem. Giving him the benefit of the doubt I went back again with the new diagnosis. Because I had been referred to him via a friend, he looked at me in horror and said "it would be just my luck that because you are a friend of a friend that this will be a really difficult case. If you'd like to go elsewhere that would be fine with me." This was after he had told me that the worst case scenario was that I could go blind.

I left in a hurry and never went back. The next guy I went to was much more reassuring, though he was so popular (or disorganized) I end up waiting hours in his waiting room for each appointment. I had to do field of vision tests which were averagely ok. Though I think I might have fudged some of it! The pressure in one of my eyes showed glaucoma, caused most likely by the **ophthalmopathy.** For this I have to use one drop per night of Xalatan. I also put an eye gel in my eyes at bedtime (I should do this more often) and wear an eye mask (courtesy of the airlines) which helps to keep my eyes moist overnight. They were drying out badly at the beginning and felt like I had broken glass in my eyes.

Having a mouth full of amalgam, I decided to have it all taken out. Ugh! Have hated the dentist for ever. I need gas to even walk through the door. However, I found a lovely alternative, holistic dentist, who forgot to give me chelation therapy it turns out. But she was very gentle and understanding. Mostly! It took a few weeks to remove them all – with long intervals in between sessions. However, towards the end, my heart started palpitations!!! I went back to the doctor who recommended a **blood thinner (warfarin)** and a beta blocker. That was rather nice. I felt very calm on that. A heart specialist was the next visit. That's enough to make anyone's heart go erratic. Because of the drugs he gave me I had to have a blood test every other day or so to check I was getting the right dose and my blood reacting correctly. This went on for a few weeks but eventually I was given the all clear and was able to go off the heart drugs.

All this time I had been having acupuncture. I think my eyes were improving – though what it was from is hard to know. Resting for an hour in beautiful surroundings with needles sticking into me was a lovely relaxing thing to do.

I did try neuro cranial therapy but only once. And also a different form of chiropractic. By this time I was taking herbs, had tried Chinese herbs and homeopathic drops and I felt my life was revolving around appointments and remembering which pills, drops etc to take when. So I stopped most things.

Now, I just take one neomercazole tablet p.d. (tried taking just a half tablet but blood test results told me to go back to one tablet). On half a tablet per day my T3 and T4 are ok but TSH is 0.21. On one tablet p.d. the TSH is 0.69 and my TSH receptor antibodies are still present at a low titre of 1.6 IU/L..

I take herbs, Bugle Weed, Hawthorn and Motherwort. When I remember I take other supplements such as magnesium, vitamin B's. There's a whole stock of them in my cupboard. Most of them half empty. I read an article and get enthusiastic, rush out and buy what I've read about. The enthusiasm wanes after a while.

I came across Svetla's site and loved the encouragement she gives. I don't know that I have changed my life greatly. I think what I really need to change is my thinking and my attitude and approach to some of the problems I face. Meditation I believe can help me with this, but I find I don’t do it as much as I should. It’s ridiculous to say that life is too busy to meditate.

Its 2 ½ years since my diagnosis. I stopped drinking until Christmas last year and now enjoy a glass of wine when I want. I also started to eat chocolate at Christmas and didn’t stop until recently. Maybe it’s the chocolate and maybe it’s the thyroid stabilizing a little, but I’ve put on weight and need to do something about that.

Last blood test results and everything was normal. I’ve been there before. I’ll be really happy when its all normal and I no longer take my neomercazole.

GRAVES' SURVIVOR – by Ted Salonica, WV

Ted and Patty live in the small community of Weirton WV, a region known as the Ohio Valley. A community which is high on values and morals where raising a family can be rewarded with lifetime relationships.

http://www.AbundantHealthyLiving.com/ became birthed as a result of looking for solutions. I developed a medical condition called TED (Thyroid Eye Disease) which for a period of time became a disabling condition which you can read about in full detail in my article Dysthroid Orbitopathy. My search for solutions lead me to become a Certified Natural Health Professional. What I learned in the process both amazed and astonished me. I have been compelled to writing articles to tell the world (so to speak) of how simple God's plan has been and how our society has strayed from it. Featured articles you may find are as follows.

Do we live to eat OR eat to live
The fountain of youth really does exist !
Does Western Medicine hold all the answers?

The Bible does it all !
Why do we get cancer ?
Is your weight stressing you out ?
Help for Heart Disease.

Our Passion is that our website will contribute to your spiritural and physical well being.

Hello, my name is Ted Salonica and I am excited to tell you – There is hope for your health. My "Graves" story begins around 1982 when I was first diagnosed with Graves' Disease. I did not elect to have radioactive treatment (RAI) at that time. Instead, I chose to seek treatment in Columbus, Ohio and underwent a treatment of Propylthiourcil (PTU). After several years, this treatment did not seem to control my problem and my eyes were beginning to develop that "Graves" look (protruding eyes). I then elected to have the radioactive treatment (RAI). I was one of the few who had much success with RAI and no other treatment or synthyroid was needed for over 7 years.

I later realized that I never really understood that by having RAI treatment, I was putting myself at a higher risk of developing TED (Thyroid Eye Disease) because RAI doesn't stop antibody production. RAI treatment – a.k.a. spent nuclear fuel (nuclear waste) is absorbed by other organs and can cause cell death or DNA mutations. Studies show an increase in cancers especially of the thyroid gland and small bowel. Other side effects include risk of developing fibromyalgia like symptoms and salivary and tear duct damage.

Now 7 years later, here I go again, the nervousness, mood swings, hand tremor's, depression and that just lousy feeling of something wrong. Blood test showed I needed to start synthyroid treatment. After several months, blood levels seemed to be stable but those feelings of irritability, brain fog, insecurity, instability and lack of excitement for living seemed to be the norm. My doctors told me that everything seemed fine to them and that my Graves condition being an auto immune disorder (which no one really has an answer for what causes it or why only certain people develop Graves disease) gave me that "just take your synthyroid and you will be fine" answer. OK, if others have this same problem then I should just accept their judgment and go on with my life. I was like most people who believed that doctors are the specialist and hold all the answers. Shame on me for accepting their opinion as the only truth! I never came to terms with what is the real root cause of Graves' Disease. I was just dealing with the symptoms.

Around August 2005 a new a more serious problem developed. I started to see double of everything. Wow, did this effect my brain and thought process. I became mentally exhausted and from morning until bedtime the double vision would come and go. One day I could function and other days I had to struggle to make it through the day.

I was diagnosed in Pittsburgh, Pa with Dysthyroid Orbitopathy (Also known as TED) Thyroid Eye Disease around November 2005. My doctors were very conservative in their treatment approach which I liked. My only treatment was steroid pills. I did not respond to this very well. Wow was I hungry, I ate everything in site. The reduced swelling was minimal and I felt terrible, so they determined I was not a good candidate for steriods. Their suggestion was to have a checkup every six months to make sure there is no optic nerve damage and just wait and see how this disease progressed. Again I was told, this is an auto-immune disease with no explanation of why or what I can do about it. I was extremely frustrated. I believed there has to be a cause for everything that happens to our bodies and I was tired of no solution answers, so I searched on my own probably like everyone who reads this story.

I became educated in Natural Health with the Certified Natural Health Professional courses through the CNHP. What I learned has changed my life and also my family and friends. A passion to spread this information developed and I started a website http://www.abundanthealthyliving.com/ to accomplish this.

What I learned is that there "Is" a cause for everything, but most importantly when you look in the mirror, you are looking at the only one responsible for your well being. Our well being is dependent on our own decision to be happy. To be happy we must first learn to not take life to seriously and spiritually be secure in the fact of our salvation. Oh, how small we are in the scheme of things and how awesome is our God!

I was very blessed in my searching to find Svetla Bankova who wrote an ebook "Life Manual for Graves Disease and Hyperthyroidism". The wealth of information on the psychological side and detailing of the mental symptoms of this disease are outstanding and I am very thankful for her work. Svetla also taught me that all illness starts in your mind and your body has a way to let you know your life is not in order. I wish I would have found her work at the very beginning of this disease. Svetla's personal experience and research and learning about natural health has proven to me that trusting in our modern medicine and Doctors will not produce the desired results. In fact, sickness may continue or even worsen. Many years of my life could have been "life worth living" -if I would have searched outside the medical box so to speak, sooner.

What I also found to help me greatly with the inflammation and swelling in and around the eyes is a natural enzyme called Serrapeptase – natures steroid, a gift from the silkworm.

http://www.goodhealth.nu/us/2118

What does Serrapeptase do? Dead and inflamed tissue are two of the key causes of the majority of ailments in the body. Serrapeptase digests (dissolves) non-living tissue, blood clots, cysts, and arterial plaque and all inflamed tissue which is then dispersed. There is a growing list of conditions that respond to Serrapeptase. In over 25 years of studies and usage no harmful side effects have been found.

In July 2008 I had correction eye surgery of my right eye. This helped some but I still needed to be fitted with prism glasses to correct my forward vision. I still have double vision to the far right and am told this may be permanent.

I have also switched from Synthyroid to the more natural solution - Armour and the results have been spectacular. No more brain fog, more energy and an all around better feeling of health.

I continue to look for natural approaches along with conventional medicine to help with conditions that the medical establishment has labeled "auto-immune disorders". That list seems to be rapidly growing.

Do not take today's modern medicine, therapy and doctors advice as the only option to your health! I believe our Western medicine is failing in a big way. Look at the current crisis our National health is in. The average patient is on 10 to 15 drugs which are not natural to our bodies with multiple side effects. Natural health solutions which used to be the normal treatment not that many years ago are being forgotten and ignored.

Hippocrates, the Father of Medicine stated "Do no harm" and Thomas Edison stated:" The doctors of the future will give no drugs, but will practice nutrition"

Wow! Has American gone in the opposite direction?

Natural Health is all about prevention, the purpose being to prevent our body from deteriorating to the point where you must rely on western medicine.

I have found many solutions to better health, cures for cardiovascular disease, calcium deficiencies, joint and arthristist problems and more with my new association with the company – The Good Life at http://www.abundanthealthyliving.4tgl.com

May GOD continue to Bless your efforts to better health.
Ted Salonica

MY GRAVES' DISEASE STORY- BY LINDA VORANO

Born and raised in Timmins, Ontario, I moved to Toronto, Ontario in 1972 and have lived there ever since. I am of Italian descent (both of my parents immigrated to Canada from Italy), single (never married, have no children), and currently I'm 62 years-old. My interests are in the field of human relationships, conflict mediation, addictions and mental health, health and wellness and photography. I once worked as a professional wedding photographer but now take pictures for my own pleasure. I have a Diploma in Addiction and Mental Health Counseling but currently choose to work as a Medical Administrative Assistant in a Research office at a large Pediatric Hospital. I have always been interested in the field of Medicine, health and wellness from a very young age.

My Graves' Story

I was diagnosed with Graves Disease in June, 2007. In January, 2007 my thyroid tests were normal and in June, 2007 my T4 was 22. It climbed to 29 in the next two months before I was assessed by an endocrinologist and diagnosed. I was most fortunate to be diagnosed early in my disease before I suffered from any drastic symptoms of hyperthyroidism or Graves eye disease.

Prior to my diagnosis, since 1993, I had been placed on Cytomel (T3) to help boost an antidepressant I was on (Tofranil). The combination of these two drugs gave the effects of a therapeutic dose of Tofranil without any of the uncomfortable side effects (dry mouth, blurred vision, constipation, orthostatic hypotension) and this worked well for me for many years. For this reason, my thyroid levels were monitored routinely (approximately every 6 months or so) and that is why my Graves' was diagnosed early before I experienced any symptoms. In checking with the physician who put me on the Cytomel he stated that to his knowledge, Cytomel use does not cause Graves disease or lead to Graves disease.

I have read where life stressors can lead to having Graves' disease and I can certainly relate that to my case. For approximately 10 months or so before my diagnosis, I was involved in a very stressful work situation with a co-worker that caused me a lot of anxiety and obsessive thinking. I experienced this person as abusive and her manner of relating to me triggered a lot of painful memories from my past. I finally told my supervisor that I was no longer willing to work with this person and would resign if necessary.

Even though I finally dealt with the person and situation that was causing me a high level of stress, my Graves' disease did not go into remission.

The only symptom I was aware of before diagnosis was that I could not tolerate heat that summer. About the time I saw my endocrinologist, (when my T4 was 29), I was experiencing rapid heartbeats (about 130 beats per minute) and she gave me Propranolol to take for this symptom until she could complete all the testing on me. I used it only on an "as needed basis" which was only when I experienced the rapid heartbeats and that isn't how you are supposed to take it but nonetheless it worked well for me that way.

When my diagnosis was confirmed, the first thing my endocrinologist mentioned was Radioactive Iodine ablation. Having known many other people who have had radioactive iodine treatment and noting that they all complained of fatigue, weight gain, cold intolerance (even on thyroid replacement), I was adamant that I would not accept this as treatment. I now know that many doctors don't mention drug therapy because they are prejudiced as I said in favor of RAI treatment for Graves. I knew about Methimazole because I am also a medical transcriptionist and I had typed a lot of Endocrine patient letters so I was aware of this treatment for Graves' disease. Upon being given Tapazole (methimazole) at a dose of 10 mg, my rapid heartbeat normalized and the only problem I have (not sure if it is due to Graves') are dry eyes. I use comfort and lubricating drops a lot. I do not have the typical Graves' ophthalmological appearance of bulging eyes though.

After my Graves' was diagnosed, my TSH level remained at less than 0.01 for the past two years of treatment and is only now starting to come back on the scale. When my TSH was 0.05 my endocrinologist decided to decrease the dose of Methimazole by half a tablet. Within two weeks, my hyperthyroid symptoms returned (rapid heartbeat making it impossible to sleep at night). I immediately increased the dose and am back to baseline so I will not be in a hurry to decrease the dose again in the future. When my values return to within the normal range for TSH, I will consider it.

I have also used naturopathic treatments like Melissa, etc which did not seem to have had any effect. I have also read an article that stated that treatment with acyl-L-Carnitine can cause Graves to go into remission. My endocrinologist was not open to this though.

So basically I have an autoimmune disease whose symptoms are well managed with treatment with 2 little pills (Tapazole). My Graves' disease is just beginning to show signs of going into remission two years after diagnosis (by lab results).

Linda Vorano
September 11, 2009

My Story about Graves’ Disease- by Margaret Meyer, Australia

My name is Margaret, am 62 years young, mother of 4 terrific daughters, and I live in Australia in a rural countryside. Have been a medical pathology technologist for 20 years but have always done all sorts of creative art leading to having an art supplies and teaching shop till 4 years ago.

I haven’t conquered this condition as yet but do feel my best in 4 years. I want to thank Svetla Bankova very much for helping me to get there.

Well, no one wants to be hyperthyroid, but it has taught me such a lot about diet, food, illnesses, exercise etc… not necessarily related to having Graves disease. I would just like to state what I have done and experienced to date in case it is of any help to others.

I have been mostly very healthy in life till 4 years ago when came down with a extremely deliberating mystery disease…sciatica or shingles? All blood tests were OK, but just could not sit down for the pain in upper legs and just so exhausted. This has lessened over the years but not completely till this year when my naturopath put me onto fish oil.

Now I believe that I had started to become hyperthyroid 2 1/2 years ago when I began to lose weight. I thought it was an aging thing and my symptoms were part of getting older and thus weaker.

In December 2008 when having dental treatment became very ill and went to hospital outpatients and was diagnosed with hyperthyroidism. Had all the symptoms, high blood pressure and T4, T3 and non-existent TSH, shakes, too many bowel movements, excruciating sinus and gum pain etc but luckily didn't go into thyroid storm.

Well, it was a tough Christmas but with lots of lemon juice, honey garlic, onions, natural nasal decongestants finally got rid of this bronchitis type flu in a few weeks. I only mention this as another person with Graves' disease on Svetla's site underwent similar symptoms so I believe the sinus involvement could be part of having full blown hyperthyroidism.

I didn't want to go on antibiotics as had with teeth. It's never good for you and can lead to Yeast infections which could be a cause of Thyroid problems.

I had lost 10 kgs of weight and was on Atenolol for blood pressure and symptoms and Neo-mercazole for the thyroid. I use to sleep on five fluffy feather doonas as felt very bony.

It was all new to me, frightening. I knew nothing about it, but lots of support from my terrific hubby and daughters and read pleasant books (P.G.Wodehouse) and sat outside in the air and tried to keep calm.

As got a bit better, started to eat maybe all the wrong things like cream, cheese, a build-up drink 'Ensure' but put nearly all the weight back on in less than a month.

I was tired, not much energy but at least the weight gain was positive. I found that the Neo-mercazole affected my liver so I changed it to Propylthiouracil, but still liver results up. My doctor was concerned so he sent me to an endocrinologist who suggested Thyroidectomy or RAI treatment.

Well, knew nothing much about anything but didn't like the suggestions so started to check out on the Internet and luckily came across Svetla's site and other information. It gave me hope that there are other approaches to the disease.

I had started a small organic vegetable garden a year before that being inspired by reading "The Ringing Cedars of Russia" books by Vladimir Megre. Luckily had planted Goitrogenic foods and it was so restful to garden even when didn't have much energy. Just seeing the green and being in the air was very beneficial.

Following the suggestions in the Download books of Svetla's, I began to do sprouting of organic seeds, also taking a liver tonic consisting of Milk Thistle (silybum marianum), Dandelion, Berberis, Globe artichoke etc. And I began also drinking Braggs organic Apple Cider Vinegar- only one to get as Organic, Raw, has magnesium, potassium and my liver results started to improve.

Now I only buy Organic produce and have also been to a naturopath who has put me on Bugleweed and Lemon balm etc for thyroid and the liver, Fish oil for the cell membranes. And as I said all the stinging in legs has gone, Multivitamins, Bilberry tablets 1200mg a day for my eyes- my eyes feel good, bathe them with chamomile tea and also saline drops soothing, but are still protruding and puffy underneath.

I also do the eye exercises each day that Svetla gives in her book and I do them when walking in the bush air- my eyes feel better in the open air. The naturopath also believes that there is mainly an underlining yeast (Candida) infection that can be the cause or product of an Auto-immune disease so am also on a Dairy/ Gluten/Sugar free diet- although I can have Goats milk/cheese and yogurt and I can have grain but not wheat or yeast.

I have decided to not have oats/barley or rye at moment so have the seeds. Rice, Buckwheat, Quinoa, Amaranth in bread and porridge. NOT Soybeans, because it has too much aluminum and female type estrogen in them.

To date 8 months later I have so much energy and I am walking really well etc. I do not take Atenolol (beta-blockers) anymore and I am on ½ (25mg) PTU tablet day and night . At moment my T4 is good but the T3 rising a bit and still the TSH is non-existent.

I came across a great book by an Australian doctor Dr Sandra Cabot. She writes lots of books with a holistic approach with a naturopath, does seminars and I went her website to buy her thyroid book "Your Thyroid Problems Solved" (by Dr Sandra Cabot /Margaret Jasinska ND) "Holistic solutions to Improve your Thyroid".

http://www.weightcontroldoctor.com.au/index.php?page=shop&subpage=cat1&id=97 ….

I found it very helpful regarding the symptoms to look out for, so you'll know when your tablet dosage is too strong -such as itchy skin, headaches, goiter. I have been then able to with quite a few blood tests and regulate my dosage to stop me going too much into a hypothyroid state. Also she believes in the Dairy/Gluten free diet etc.

So I haven't as yet conquer the disease, but as I said, I have learnt so much about eating well, growing good food, milling my own grain/seeds, having the great vinegar and have passed on this information to other people so that in turn it has helped them to better health.

All best and keep positive…Margaret

Some great books I can suggest are:

1. Svetla Bankova..www.gravesdiseasecure.com

2. "Your Thyroid Problems Solved" by Dr Sandra Cabot

www.weightcontroldoctor.com.au

3. "How I can grow and use SPROUTS as living food?" And also the Self-Sufficiency and Herb Books by Isabell Shipard

www.herbsarespecial.com.au

4. The Ringing Cedars of Russia- by Vladimir Megre

www.ringingcedarsofrussia.com

5. "The World's Healthiest Foods" by George Mateljan. You can find it at www. Amazon.com

6. "Take Control of Your Health" and Escape the sickness Industry" by Elaine Hollingsworth

www.doctorsaredangerous.com She tells you why foods(e.g. soybeans) etc. are bad for you

" Herbs and Health with Hilde Hemmes" ..... www.asohn.com.au

My Graves’ Disease story- by Christine Rhoads, Southeastern PA, USA

I was diagnosed with Graves disease in May of 2008. My primary doctor was just doing a routine blood analysis and discovered that I had no THS (Thyroid Stimulating Hormone) being released by the Hypothalamus for the Pituitary gland to tell the Thyroid to turn Iodine into Thyroid hormones. He did a follow up test of my T3 and T4 (the two Thyroid hormones) and found many times the amount that it should have been.

As far as I know I had no symptoms (except maybe a bit of heart palpitation that I wanted to discuss with my doctor). My eyes didn't bug out too much, and I wasn't losing any weight. But my primary doctor sent me to a specialist who felt my thyroid gland and confirmed the diagnosis. He discussed all the alternatives (medication, removal, radiation, etc.) and I was adamantly against all of them. I did, however, give in to taking Methimazole. But I also purchased your book and found that Stress was a major influencer in the disease.

I discussed this fact with my doctor, who dismissed it as poppycock. He said stress had absolutely no influence over the disease. He also said it didn't matter what I ate or whether or not I exercised. I decided he was full of it.

The fact was, March and April had been just about the most stressful months of my life. Both of my parents (who had divorced many years prior) had ended up in the hospital. Both needed to be convinced they should move into assisted living. Dealing with them was extremely difficult, and the time I had been investing had taken away from my normal wellness routine of 90 minutes of daily exercise and healthy eating.

By June, however, much of the stress was gone as my Mother was safely ensconced in assisted living and my Father had stopped drinking and had improved enough to live independently again. I returned to my routine, including Taijiquan which calmed me and controlled my stress levels. I did make one change the doctor requested: I stopped taking a daily vitamin that had iodine in it (replacing it with One A Day, the only iodine-free vitamin I could find), and started using Kosher salt without iodine. The next call from the specialist was a frantic call to stop taking the Methimazole as my Thyroid hormones had fallen dangerously low. The doctor pronounced me "in remission" by October, when my levels returned to normal after I stopped taking the Methimazole. He told me that in 95% of the cases, Graves’ disease never returns.

That's my story. Feel free to use it.
Christine Rhoads

A Story by Barbara Oczachowski

My story is short.

I was diagnosed with overactive thyroid about 3 years ago. Each visit to the specialist had only one conclusion; the doctor advised me to burn my entire thyroid and to go on the pill for the rest of my life. I was divested with the suggested solution and had a difficult time believing I would have to accept this as the only option.

For the first two years, I followed my doctor's advice and took Tapazole. During each visit every six months, the doctor reminded me that if it doesn't help, that it would be ideal to burn it. He was not very optimistic and therefore didn't give me any hope to recover.

When he increased my dose to 15mg a day, I started to feel worse. I started to gain a lot of weight. It was then I decided to decrease the dose to 10mg per day and again shortly I further decreased it to 5mg per day. Considering I was decreasing the dose gradually, I started to feel better and finally I made the decision to stop taking it completely! It's been three months now and I feel good.

I finally told my doctor that I have been decreasing my dosage gradually over the last several months on my own. He was surprised that the results of my T4 and T3 were good. My TSH is still not satisfactory at 0.17 but is slowly improving as 2 months ago it was 0.05.

As a result of my TSH, the doctor advised that the symptoms may reoccur if I do not take the pills but suggested that I wait thirty days and do another test. As I'm waiting, I am hoping that everything will turn out satisfactory.

In terms of diet, I try to eat whole foods and I tend to not use salt in my cooking and attempt to avoid foods that have sodium. I take two herbal calming pills before I go to bed to help me sleep better, but I also think that maybe it's also calming my body and that it's helping the thyroid too.

I try to avoid stress.

I believe that I got the thyroid problem shortly after some kind of flu that I caught while traveling to Asia. Due to extreme weather followed by massive layovers, I spent 2 days in an airport in Japan. Airports are full of germs. My entire vacation of three weeks consisted of endless coughing and choking which continued to persist for two months. I did get a prescription for antibiotics which I took, but it did not help and instead made me weaker.

Before I had my first visit to the specialist, my family doctor sent me for multiple nuclear tests. The exposure to radiation was unnecessary and I still can't believe I swallowed radioactive pills.

I hope that those that read this, will inform others to await for the specialist diagnosis and postpone any unnecessary radiation exposure.

Lastly, I eat very little red meat and limited seafood to fish preferably from lakes.

I once read that mangoes are good for my thyroid and therefore I tend to consume plenty of them.

When my test results improved a little, I believed I would get better. I stopped to worry and I started to feel better every week. I am sure the positive thinking over the fact that I would eventually get rid of my over active thyroid condition had a lot to do with me getting healthier. I wish the doctor had given me hope, then perhaps I would have felt better a lot earlier.

Barbara Oczachowski

The Story of my 16 years old daughter- by Elliot Kim

I have a wonderful story for you.

I lost my wife to cancer in 2001. I did everything possible to cure or at least help her. But it didn't work. She passed away, leaving me and 2 young children.

A couple of years ago, my daughter complained about her headache, insomnia, abdominal pain and nausea (I don't know if those spelling are correct. But you know what I mean). We went to the doctor. He tried this and that to figure out what is wrong for her. After a series of tests, he finally came up with the diagnosis. It was the Hyperthyroidism.

I searched Internet and figured out that it is incurable. You have to either take out the gland as a whole or radiate it, which is the same as taking it out as a whole. So the only solution is basically to take it out. The problem then is the metabolism. She has to take pills for the rest of her life for the metabolism hormone. It might work for some time, but most of the time she will suffer from either hyper or hypothyroidism. She was only 16 years old. Now she has to rely on the medicine for the rest of her life. What about her study? What about then her marriage life? Can she even marry? I lost my wife. Now am I losing my daughter as well? NO!!!

I look through Internet and found about alternative medicine therapy. We went to the doctor in Toronto, Canada. She said it was easy to cure. She started giving some natural medicines to my daughter through IV. Of course, she prescribed Tapazole for the time being. She said to reduce the dose gradually as time goes by.

After taking the IV for 1 1/2 months, we came back to California. My daughter started feeling better very slowly. About 3 months later, my daughter was totally healed. She quit taking Tapazole and still felt wonderful. She has her original thyroid gland unhurt and she doesn't have any kind of hyperthyroidism whatsoever.

We went to the local doctor to test her thyroid hormone. They were perfect! Now my daughter goes to a University and majors in veterinarian study. So I hope everyone who has hyperthyroidism to try the alternative medicine therapy at least. Getting rid of the gland to cure the symptom is like to cut the leg to cure the scar in the foot. I hope my writing will give a hope for all who suffer and get despaired from hyperthyroidism.

God bless you all,

Elliot Kim

From Hypothyroidism to Hyperthyroidism- by Meria Heller

For thirteen years I was on synthroid for a slow (hypothyroid) thyroid. Went for blood work every six months, and the prescription never changed.

Then I went vegetarian. Two years after becoming a vegetarian and no longer ingesting other hormones through the hormone laden meats served to us, my doctor called and said "your thyroid is working, you don't need the medication any longer". Of course he made no correlation to my diet change and my thyroid function, although I was already PAST menopause and a medical miracle.

Two years later, I developed Graves disease which was misdiagnosed as cosmetic, and a "surgeon" carved away at my eyelid to correct it. He didn't, but did destroy my eyelid. I then went to the Mayo Clinic where the doctor took one look at me and said "Graves’ Disease". I then saw an eye surgeon for corrective surgery on the mess the first "doctor" did. He had me wait until the flare up in the eye was gone before proceeding. The surgery corrected the ugliness of the eyelid, and my eyesight as well.

I continued on in my vegetarian lifestyle, and began working out five days a week. The doctor says my thyroid is a tad fast, and I refused any medication due to the damage it had already caused me. The doctor at the Mayo said that the Graves’ disease could be the result of 13 yrs on synthroid!

Today I have no symptoms of hypothyroidism or Graves’ Disease. I do not take medication, but continue on in my healthy lifestyle.

Let this be a warning to people taking medications, and eating animal products laden with induced hormones, antibiotics and drugs. What goes in, must come out.

Meria Heller
Producer/Host
The Meria Show
www.Meria.net

Graves' Disease Story- by Viola Herd

My name is Viola Herd I was diagnosed with Graves' disease in November of 2009.

After years of violent headaches I had the worst headache of my life and my eft eye was swelling. I could not concentrate and to be quite frank. I really hought I was going senile. The pain in my eye and head was so severe that I as put in intensive care for one week.

I do not remember anything except waking up and I was seen by an endocrinologist that told me I had a thyroid storm. I was petrified I didn't even know what that was. She explained to me that I would have to take thyroid medicine for the rest of my life.

It has been a year now and my left eye is a little better but is still not back to normal. It took months to get my function back.

Remembering things that I knew before. It was the most devastating time of my life.

My eyes are still a problem so are my headaches. However I have implemented some changes in my life.

I was under a lot of stress when this all happened. I was separated from my husband, I was working two jobs, I had custody of my two grandchildren Daniel & Mary because their parents were on Drugs.

I truly believe stress is the biggest contributor to Graves' Disease. I was under a lot of pressure for several years. My parents were terminally ill. I quit my job to take care of them and I was burning the candle at both ends of the stick for a period of 5 years. But even after the death of my parents I still was under a lot of pressure working two jobs. Taking care of two ADHD children. It was not easy and made me very ill.

But today I have changed a few things. I applied for disability which I still am fighting for. That eliminated the stress of work. I still have custody of my grandchildren but I got them a therapist to help out as they were devastated when I got sick. I reconciled with my husband. And reduced a lot of the stress in my life. I am on a healthier diet and I see my doctors regularly. I believe if you have Graves' disease it is a disease caused by stress that is my personal opinion. I am now 49 and was totally healthy before a very stressful 5 years period.

I hope my story can give hope to anyone with Graves' disease. There is help. I ordered some natural products for Graves'. I am still waiting for it to arrive however I have hope. My advise to anyone is start to enjoy life a little you need to slow down, eat healthier, eliminate stresses- to the best you are able to.

Learn to say NO to every little thing someone wants you to do. It may save your life.

You can get your life back, God Bless, I wish you well.

Viola Herd

My Thyroid Eye Disease Story- by Sarah Biran

About 6 years ago, when I was 57, I was diagnosed with Hyperthyroidism, which I learned lately that is called Graves' disease.

The main and only symptom I had then was double vision. I had to see many doctors: optometrist, eye doctors, endocrinologist, many hospitals until finally they decided that my eye problems are from Hyperthyroidism.

All these months while I was in treatment I continued working, I am a kitchen designer and my bulk of work is designing kitchens on the computer, so to be able to do this, I used to cover one eye.

I was treated with radioactive iodine (pills) for a few weeks and it seemed that it worked. My tests were perfect, the double vision was gone, the doctors were very pleased and all was well for the next 5 years.

In August 2008 I started to have double vision, painful dry eyes, extreme tearing, a lot of discomfort, but I live in USA, don't have insurance, so I suffered until the pain was unbearable.

On Nov 14, 2008 I went to Toronto Canada to get some help (I am Canadian). Obviously in Canada I had to see a few eye specialists that only prescribe tear drops, or tell you to tape your eyes at night.

I waited countless hours in many hospitals with no results. My eyes were popping out , the right eye had an open space of one and a half cm (about 3/4") and left eye was open for 1/2cm (or 1/4" maybe), both eyes were red and tearing.

One thing they all knew for sure: this is from Graves', called Thyroid Eye disease (TED), but no real help. I was already on Tapazole because the thyroid test was a little abnormal. It was clear to me by that time that no endocrinologist knew anything about TED and no eye doctor knew anything about Graves' disease (just the name).

Finally I found Oculoplastic Surgeon named Dr. James H. Oestreicher, M.D., F.R.C.S. (C). This means he has completed highly specialized training in plastic surgery, as it relates to the eyes and their surrounding structures. Thus, he is better qualified to perform eye-related surgery than ordinary plastic surgeons. He performs lid lengthening (for patients with hyperthyroid "staring eyes"). You can read about him and his spectacular practice

http://www.torontoeyelidsurgery.com/html/about_dr__oestericher.html

He operated on me on Dec 5, 2008, gave me Prednison (steroids) for inflammation and antibiotic ointment called Cloxan which I still use now.
I could close my eyes, but I still had to tape them at night. He also sent me to a hospital and I got radiation on my eyes for 10 consecutive days.

On Feb 4 2009 I finished my radiation and Dr Oestreicher suggested to do a major operation DECOMPRESSION. This is one thing I am still resisting, all I read about it is terrifying and horrible.

So on Feb 5, 2009 I came back home to San Diego, my condition didn't improve much, the double vision is gone, but the muscles in my eyes have a mind of their own, cannot focus.

As of today, September 3 2009 I still have pain in my eyes (right eye was always worse then left), I have a hard time driving, so I try not to, I always cover my right eye to be able to read, or walk, or drive, or function. I get headaches, tearing eyes, no light at the end of the tunnel for me.

Your book and emails helped me a lot, trying to be optimistic, but I feel disabled, I gained weight and can't lose. Amazingly I never met ONE person that had or has this condition not in San Diego or in Toronto, so thank you for the web site you started, it is very very helpful, you doing a great job.

Bless you, Svetla

Here is a picture of me before I got the radiation pills 6 years ago. If you need or want I will send you pictures after the eyelids operation and maybe a recent one.

Take care,

Sarah Biran

A Successful RAI story- by Kim Mason

For many years all I wanted to feel was normal, but I'd forgotten what that felt like:

I first noticed something was wrong when I was pregnant with my third child. I would go for my regular antenatal checks and I felt like my heart rate was elevated and I was warm like I'd been rushing around. I thought that my blood pressure was up a little but every time I had it checked it was normal.

There were other things that were happening that I couldn't understand but once diagnosed was able to (at the time I just put it down to the pregnancy). My muscles seemed to be weak and wasting. I fell over a few times and had trouble going up steps (I only had three to climb to get into my house but this sometimes felt to much).

I had a lot of other symptoms -but didn't pay much attention until my baby failed to gain weight. He was breast feeding frequently and not gaining any weight, although I was losing weight at a steady pace (with no exercise). I had to supplement him with formula and he started to thrive. I seemed to be tired a lot but I couldn't sit down for any length of time. I always felt I had to be doing something.

My hair was thinner my skin dry, sex drive was non existence, my eyes were bulging, I seemed to be nervous all the time and I thought I was starting to lose my mind.

I was angry a lot, for nothing. Nobody knew whether to talk to me or not. I would sometimes be awake during the night for 2-3 hours, then my heart would race and pound like it was trying to jump out of my chest. I actually though I was going to die.

It started during the day as well and I would go and lay down. My resting pulse rate was about 115 bpm. I looked on the Internet for my symptoms and it said hyperthyroidism. I went to the doctors and was prescribed Carbimazole and a letter was sent to the endocrinologist. The first few days on the medication I felt extremely nauseous.

The first symptom I noticed to go was the heart palpitations and I started to sleep through the night or as well as one can with a seven month old baby. I was extremely lucky that my husband was very helpful and would get up to the baby in the night just in case my heart would start racing.

Over the next year or so my TSH and FT3 levels would go up and down a lot but not really leveling out until my baby was about 2. I was recommended to the specialist for Radioactive Iodine therapy but was declined until my baby was at least three years of age.

When I finally went for RAI I wasn't quite sure what to expect. It tasted like stale water and there was only about 100ml to drink. It wasn’t too bad. My endocrinologist didn’t think that it was going to work and that I may have to go for another dose of RAI but I haven't and after 4 years since I was first diagnosed I was finally starting to feel that things were starting to improve. I may end up with hypothyroidism but I’m not to worried about that at the moment. If it happens I'll deal with it then.

My grandmother was hyperthyroid and has had RAI and my sister is Hypothyroid so there may be a family link to thyroid disorders.

Another year has gone by and I have been discharged from my endocrinologist. My eyes have receded, my hair is thicker and the Graves’ disease is still there but knowing what it is and that there are ways to deal with it, most days are good.

I really feel a new, dare I say, normal person.

Kim Mason
40 years old

Mother of three

A Graves’ Disease story across time and years – by Rabern Lee

Well, here goes, as briefly as possible. I was born in 1924, and graduated High School in 1942 when we were really into WWII. I married that same year, just before my husband went over seas I got pregnant--same story many of us teenage girls did at that time. Consequently I had a son, and then when he came home from the War I had another son, who now live in Florida and Nevada, and I seldom see them or the grandkids or greats!!

After my first husband and I were divorced in 1965 and remarried in 1973 and then divorced again in 1979, he married another lady and finally died in 1988. Because of lack of jobs in my small hometown I have lived all over the country, and loved every busy part of it.

I was always very active and busy with my huge flowerbed and both my mother's house next door when we had moved from California, to North Carolina and then ultimately back up home and next door to my Mom and Dad in 1988. I had my own house huge flower bed that I planted and cared for and was the wonder of my neighborhood.

Then my second husband died in May 2000, then in October 2000 my Dad died and he was probably the 'love of my life'. Everyone loved Dad. And I moved Mom over to my house and cleared out and sold hers, and then she died in 2005, at the age of 98 same as Dad.

During this time I lost a lot of weight and was down to 77 lbs. when my Dr. said, "Oh I guess we'd better check your thyroid." And thus the hyperthyroidism!!! So he started me on Levothyroxin in October 2004, after I had already had a heart attack, had palpitations every since I was 7 years old, at various times, and thus the pacemaker was inserted in 2003!!! No one obviously knew that they thyroid problems began long before the pacemaker.

After several other diseases became apparent to the heart specialist, and they couldn't get my thyroid medicines balanced, they decided on the RAI. Well, my thyroid is still not stabilized; it was just changed again a couple months ago.

That was when my doctor mentioned Graves’ disease to an intern who was also learning and playing visiting Doctor that day. He had never told me that but my eyes were beginning to bulge. My brother's eyes were like that most of his life, so I thought nothing about it. They kept getting worse, and then last year 2008 I started with the double vision.

I got checked out and got new glasses in about April. Didn't help, and since the glasses didn't fit right either, in Oct. I went to the Ophthalmologist again, and got another pair of glasses. Finally, after the doctor had mentioned the Graves disease, I started reading articles on my computer about it. Then one of the reference pages was your article on Graves Disease and hyperthyroidism, and the eye problems.

Sounded too familiar so I contacted Svetla Bankova and have started using her suggested methods of treating this RAI and Graves' disease problems. I have just started recently and so far the eye exercises are helping. And I've been watching my diet for a while now. And now weigh 132, have lost 5 lbs. And my eyes are getting much better, but still have a little ways to go, plus we're still working on regulating the hyperthyroid meds.

Hope this helps others understanding of my life with thyroid problems.

Rabern Lee

I was born---literally in a log cabin "on the slab" as they used to call it, in 1924 about 5 miles north of nowhere I should say. I am not sure of the date they started laying the pavement north from Lawrenceville, Ill. But it was finished about 1920, So the old timers used to call it a 'slab' and this is the term I grew up with. The log cabin had been my father's mother's home before she married my grandfather around 1898, and my father was 16 when she died during the famous 1918 influenza rage. My father married my mother in 1923 at the age of 20 and Mom was 16. And they moved into his mother's empty log cabin. Dad was Marion H. Phillippe and Mom was Lena Mary Gosnell. For some strange reason they named me Rabern Isabelle Phillippe.

I was the oldest off 4, one sister and two brothers (parents and one brother now deceased). I was musically inclined during all my growing up years and was in most all the plays and musicals in school, and we couldn't afford a musical instrument except for an upright piano that my father worked and paid for, but this was the first year of my high school and Mom did my teachers laundry for her for my lessons. But High School became rather tedious with going at 7:00 for our music classes before school, including the Acapello choir etc. after school I stayed till about 6:00 because my teacher told me I had the best perfect tone and rhythm of anyone she had, so when she approached me with a book on Baton Twirling and asked if I could learn that I took the book home and studied it. I asked my Dad if he could make me one of those. At that time there was none for sale in this area, and my Dad was "Jack of all trades" so to speak, including carpentry and electricity. So he got an old broom handle that Mom had used up, and glued a small rubber ball on the end, and thus I had a baton to work with. Balance on it wasn't so good, but I showed my teacher what I could do with it the next day, and she wrote to the company that wrote the book and a store in a nearby, larger town soon had them for sale.

Then I was to chose two other girls that would like to also learn the twirling, which I did, and Dad made two more baton substitutes. But once we got started, all the girls wanted to do that, so when the batons came to our area, we all had one. I taught 16 kids in our backyard on Saturday mornings, and thus the Drum Majorettes were formed in our town, and it progressed rapidly during our final High School years. And I became the leader of the band when we performed.

That's not such a great feat now, since you hardly see any baton twirlers any more. But it was the highlight of my school years, along with the acting, so I had visions of going on with that. However, when I graduated in 1942 we were in the middle of the big WWII, which is becoming just a memory now. I had no love life during school years. I was too busy.

I had studied stenography and typing in school so therefore became a legal secretary the day after school was out. And I earned $7.50 a week. Actually that was good pay then and I was proud of myself.

Two months late I met my fate in a good looking curly headed boy from a neighboring town, I followed him to Mobile, Alabama to the airforce base there and we were married. But it was a honey-moonless wedding of course during the war, and my last name became Herrin, and three months later he was shipped to an airbase south of St. Louis, which was closer to home of course--about 150 miles actually. But 3 months after that he was shipped overseas and I came home to Mama!!! Six months after that I gave birth to my oldest of two sons, in 1943. And my husband made it home in 1946.

From there on it was one insurrection after another, though there were some good years, until 1965 and we were divorced. At that time we were gong through a recession and no jobs here that I could afford to live on, and I had worked in St. Louis before so I moved to St. Louis area and tried a few jobs until I got hired by McDonald-Douglas, secretary to the head of the labor department.

During that time I had the opportunity to go to Manhattan, N.Y. and remained there for 8 months as secretary to an art and antique dealer. Then back to St. Louis for another few years. Then my former husband came to get information on one of my sons. They both had served time in the Navy and were married and had moved far away from this small town to get decent jobs in their chosen professions. So I guess you might say we fell in love again and were remarried. This time it lasted for only 6 years, the first time for 23 years.

So it was back to the small town living again. Then in 1979 we were divorced for the final time, and we were in another recession and I moved to California where my oldest son was living. Found a job, bought a mobile home, so I could move where the work was I presume, but I did find a good job working the insurance claims for a hospital.

And ultimately met my next and last husband James Lee. He was already retired and when we married I retired for good too in 1983.We traveled a lot and saw many parts of the country and also visited my boys and their families many times. He had no children and more or less adopted mine and all the grand kids. There are now 4 grandkids, 9 great-grands and soon to be 1 great-great-- all across the country. We lived in California for a while, then moved to North Carolina and visited with his sister and my brother who lived nearer the coast of N.C. Then in 1988 we moved back to my old home place Lawrenceville, Il.-a town of less than the 4800 is states on the welcoming sing at the edge of town. So I made a complete circle in my lifetime.

Jim died in May of 2000 and My Dad in October that year. I took Mom in with me to take care of her until she died in 2005. Both parents were 98 years old when they died. My doctors tell me I'll live a long life too. I feel I already have!!! And I doubt they are right since I have so many illnesses.

I was born with Thalasemia which is an anemic condition which lowers the immune system. I also now have a pacemaker, Gerd, COPD, Osteoarthritis and Stenosis of the spine, and now Hyperthyroidism, which has caused the double vision, and probably the rest.

Now, I know!! That’s more than you needed, but that's my life. Not exactly a Bio, but I hope you an get enough from that.

A Graves' Disease Story - by Barbara Trussel

Barbara Trussel is an English teacher from Nottingham, England

I was first diagnosed with a hyper-active thyroid about four years ago. I received two doses of radio therapy – the first didn't work- before I gradually began to feel better. Because I had been without treatment for a couple of months in-between doses my thyroid levels were sky high. I ended up with three months off work whilst the second dose became effective and my levels returned to normal. I have been having regular blood tests over the last nineteen months and luckily my thyroxin levels are back to normal. At present I need no medication but will be monitored annually, to check whether levels remain stable.

Unfortunately, about ten months ago I developed thyroid eye disease. My consultant always told me that if I noticed anything different about my eyes then I must contact him immediately. The first signs were a constant ache behind the eyes and then double vision, which only lasted a couple of minutes, when I woke in the mornings. This soon disappeared. My eyes also eventually became red and swollen.

Since then I have been referred to the Ophthalmic Department at the local hospital, where my condition has been monitored. Realistically there is nothing they can do. I was told to use Lacrilube ointment at night and Visco Tears in the day as lubricants. My eyes were very runny and I initially mis-interpreted this as being 'wet' eyes not dry! However, I realized after a few weeks that my eyes probably were dry and this was nature's way of providing its own lubricant! Once I started to use the lubricants suggested then I did receive some relief.

Now, ten months on, my condition has improved. The eye consultant reckons I'm about half way towards recovery which I am actually very pleased about because it means I am, hopefully, over the worst. My left eye is slightly more protrusive than the other but I'm not sure that other people would particularly notice this. I am hoping for an almost full recovery cosmetically.

I have taken flax seed oil daily and drunk loads of pineapple juice. I think the key to feeling better is to focus on some positive things which you think could help you recover. Who knows if these actually work or if nature just takes its course and the recovery process will happen anyway? The worst time for me was being told that there was no cure, no tablets, no treatment! And of course the cosmetic prognosis was devastating.

I have actually done one thing which has been very useful to me and may be to other people. About eight months ago I started to keep a chart of how my eye was that day -nothing fancy- just a scoring system from one to ten of how it felt. My left eye was always so much worse, so on a daily basis I gave it a score out of ten. I think I may have been hoping to find some sort of pattern and maybe then I would know why it was more inflamed some days than others.

It is really interesting now to look back. I can see a very gradual improvement. Six months ago, there were a lot of scores of 3,4,5,6,7. Now, over time the scores hover around 7,8,9 and even 10! I have noticed a dip in scores when I had a two hour journey, by plane, back in March and again, a four hour plane journey in July. This made me wonder whether change in pressure could affect the eyes-similar to it affecting ears on flights. I only realized this by looking at my chart. On the way back from the four hour flight I tried to keep my eyes closed and listened to my i-pod most of the time. I also considered wearing some sort of goggles but couldn’t find any to buy. (It was a late at night flight so I wouldn’t have looked too strange!) My eyes were on that occasion unaffected by the flight!

As there is at present no effective cure, I hope that by sharing experiences people will be able to gain support from each other. I have been willing to try anything! The good news is, I suppose, that eventually the disease will ‘burn itself out’ and, hopefully, you can return to feeling ‘normal’ once more. Also, when I went for a routine two yearly eye test yesterday my optician told me that my eyesight had deteriorated ‘normally’ since the last eye test and that the Thyroid eye disease had not affected the expected course of my vision at all. There was only a slight change in prescription, which would have happened anyway.

Barbara (England U.K.)

If it is shinny it might not be gold by Blanca Mares, Mexico

My name is Blanca Mares, I am 47 years old, I live in Puebla, Mexico, I am an Accountant and I work in my own accounting firm. My family had 5 members but in 1996, my mother and my brother died.
I am married to an English man that I met in London and we live here in Mexico . My Childhood was in a small town near Guadalajara Jalisco. I enjoyed living there because I was close to nature.
I love gardening; I like to feel soil in my hands. I like so much dogs and reading.

I don't have kids but I adopted my brother kids. I love my job so much. I am very friendly person and my aim in life is to improve myself spiritually.

If it is shinny it might not be gold

I am writing this title of my article because I have learned that when I was diagnosed with Graves' Disease, doctors told me different results. So I learned that they don' t have the last word in the diseases matter- and if it is shinny it might not be gold.

The last Word is my one, and I can change my life if I want.

With that thing in my mind I was getting more and more information about graves disease and I found so much information. I put in practice all the advices, I bought many books and I got very good results.

I did what Andreas Moritz said. I did what Svetla said. I did what Edgar Cayce said. I did what Jim Humble said. They are angels that come to me when I needed them.

I was suffering all the symptoms of Graves' Disease and I knew that there was a close relationship between mind and body and I worked on it.

I know that with a right attitude and with determination everything is possible. I learned that I had to change in my mind health instead disease. I had in my mind love instead anger, I had in my mind harmony instead stress. It was not easy- I battled in my mind all the time but I had my Scatology professor near and my family supporting me in this war.

Graves' Disease has brought so many good things to me. I learned so much about Alternative Medicine but the most important thing is i learned so much of myself. I am stronger and I proved my determination to heal myself with alternative medicine. I know now that I can face everything that happen in my life with the right attitude.

I was diagnosed in October of 2008 and I can say that today my levels of T3, T4 and THS are normal. Today 23 of September - I am normal again. My eyes are improving more and more everyday and I was prescribed glasses that I have wore them only twice.

I am enjoying my new life, eating healthy food, practicing yoga, and the most important thing is to share my knowledge with more people. Not only with people who are suffering from Graves' Disease but also with people that are suffering different diseases.

One woman told me you are and angel that heaven has bring to me. I felt that this disease came to me with a purpose- to help myself and help others with all my love and without any financial interest.

Life gives us hard time to learn and change our lives, it happened to me with Graves' Disease. I know that I am happier now than before this experience.

Thanks all my angels but also thanks to myself for this beautiful experience, and when a doctor gives you a diagnosis ask yourself. If it is shinny it might not be gold.

Blanca Mares
Mexico

Don’t go for RAI, if you care about your eyes- by Susan Hansen

Susan Hansen, age 54, happily married to John Hansen, for 5 years. Hometown is Madison, WI. Worked for 34 years at AT&T. John and I each have 3 children- ages 30, 27, 25, 23, 21 and 19. We have one grandchild, age 3 and one on the way.....due 3-14-10,very exciting!

My name is Susan Hansen and I have Graves' Disease. I was diagnosed in approximately April of 2004.

My original doctor had seen me a few weeks earlier for a sinus infection. I had lost 28 lbs within 2 1/2 months. I was trying to lose weight for my upcoming wedding, which was July 2004. So, I guess I didn't think too much of it. He said specifically though that he didn't think it was thyroid and wasn't going to check on it. And, only ran tests for diabetes, etc.

Then, 2 wks later I was sick again. He was out of town and I saw his associate. She thought maybe it was thyroid because my blood pressure was high and I had some shortness of breath. And, in talking further to her, she asked if I had the other symptoms like heat intolerance, insomnia and so on. I had most of the symptoms that she described and she tested me for it. This was on a Friday.

She called me herself personally Monday morning at 8:30am and said yes, I had Graves. Referred me to an endocrinologist and mentioned RAI. But, that it could change my eyes.

Well, she never went into detail as to how that may change my eyes. So, I met with the endocrinologist. He said the overall cure-all is RAI. But, that it could change my eyes. And, again, like her, did NOT explain how. BUT, he said it "probably" won't. I trusted this man.

I had the RAI done and within 7-10 eyes my eyes started bulging out. I called him and he said I would have to see an ophthalmologist. I asked why didn't he tell me this is how the eyes are affected. AND now what was I going to do? He said they "usually aren't."What does that mean???? Usually. If there is a chance, at all, then all checking should be done first before someone goes through this. AND if there is any doubt, the ophthalmologist should be contacted first, not last...when it's too late.

When I asked the endocrinologist why didn't he have me see the ophthalmologist first, he said "that is not the process". I said, "your process has to change, I trusted you and now you have destroyed my life.'

Because the ophthalmologist that I saw said he would not have recommended this for me and sad but, true.....he had to tell me the bad news ....my eyes would never be the same as they were.
I would never look like ME again.

I have been able to handle anything that has come my way in my life. But, this has been devastating.

I have to say though, 2 people that I work with were going to go through with the RAI and I convinced them not to. Their eyes were showing some signs of puffiness, like mine. But, since they didn't go through with the RAI, their eyes went back to normal.

I am glad I could help someone else.

My wedding went as planned. I have a wonderful husband who (I hope) loves me no matter what. I know it bothers him though. I don't look like the same person he fell in love with.

And, not a day goes by without me being upset about how I look. Plus, now I have glaucoma and that possibly could be because of the eyes protruding and it brings the pressure up. I have seen 2 different glaucoma specialists and one said there is a lot of controversy about that, but, that he agrees with me. It was probably caused by the Graves' and RAI. I should have been checked further before I was given the RAI. I wasn't.

I now see a fabulous endocrinologist who I love and trust. I have a terrific ophthalmologist and glaucoma specialist.

Back in March, April 2004, I was working full-time, juggling my kids schedules, planning my wedding, etc. I truly wished I had taken the time to question more and find out more information on this. He should have IN DETAIL told me about what can happen. Or I should have asked the doctor if I could be put on medication and then wait till after my wedding to make any major decisions. He never offered it either. AND now he is reluctant to give up my medical file for the new doctor. Incredible. Oh, and he was trying to find out information from the new endocrinologist. My new endocrinologist's office called to tell me.

One of these days, I will appear in his office and demand my file. By law, he has to give it to me. A surprise visit will be upcoming.

I have an appointment next month to see 2 surgeons that specifically handle Graves' patients. It is a very scary prospect for me though. So, we'll see.

My advice to all....Information is power. Without it, it can change your life forever. Get all the information you can, then weigh the pros and cons and decide what is best for you.

My "Graves" Journey- Ruth McLean, New Zealand

My name is Ruth; I live in Auckland, New Zealand. I have 3 adult children and eight grandchildren. Until recently I worked as a Bank Teller. My hobbies and interests include gardening, old fashioned roses, patchwork and reading.

I was diagnosed with Graves nine years ago; the diagnosis came as a shock. I had never even heard of Graves, let alone knew how to recover from it. Yes I had a stressful situation in my life. One day I was feeling well, and the next day it was like running into a brick wall.

The Dr gave me the usual three options for recovery, PTU, radioactive iodine or surgery. Not being keen on surgery (it's so final) and not wanting the RAI either, I opted to take medication. I was later able to discontinue this. I put on weight; even though the norm with Graves is to lose weight.

I also believed that Graves had to be reversible. I figured I hadn't always had it, there had to be a reason I got it, and there had to be a way to reverse it. The Doctors options seemed to me to be just treating the symptoms and not the cause.

I began researching everything I could find about Graves, on the Internet, and at the library. The first site I found that wasn't actually trying to "sell" me anything was by a man called Bill, where it seemed that the lack of vitamins and minerals may be the cause. Copper was very important, so off I went and bought some copper tablets from the local Health Shop. If only recovery was that easy!!

I soon came to the realization that I would need to totally eliminate stress from my life. I had been subjected to long term, severe emotional stress. However I realized that in order to get better I needed to find ways of coping in order to survive. I also took a long hard look at my diet to see if any improvements could be made. I also looked at things such as products I used, to see if it was possible there could be a link to my immune system attacking me.

At the beginning of my illness I had the usual brain fog, palpitations and very bad panic attacks, heat intolerance and extreme exhaustion. I remember attending a computer class at a local night school, and I was unable to comprehend most of it, my husband who also attended had to coach me at home.

Then a friend told me about "Newstart" -

Nutrition
Exercise
Water

Sunshine
Temperance
Air
Rest
Trust in God

And so I began to implement some changes in my life.

I wrote to a Dr I knew in America who advised me to take Bugleweed, and I found this helpful. I added essential fatty acids to my diet along with colloidal minerals. I tried everything I could possibly think of in order to get better. When sleeping was a problem I used natural sleeping aids from the health shop, as a good nights sleep, I believe, is crucial to healing.

There is no "quick fix" for Graves. It is an extremely debilitating condition, and one that others don't understand, because you look normal. I cannot say that any one thing I have done, has made me better, it has been a combination of things that has meant a very slow and painful return to health. Often my family and friends have not been as understanding as I needed them to be.

There were many times when I thought that perhaps I had made the wrong decision in refusing the Doctors options. Many days when an attack sent me crawling into bed, in the hope that I would be able to sleep, and the pain would go. Then in October 2008 I made the decision to go to a health retreat in Australia to see if that would help me. We did juice fasting 2 days each week, and every day we had a "steam" which helps the body to throw off toxins.

The Doctor at the health retreat said we are all poisoned because we live post-industrial. We also had lemon juice in water every morning 15 min before eating. This helps to cleanse the liver. It's a habit I have kept up.

But I still wasn't feeling well. I didn't know what to try next, and I didn't know who could help me. My regular GP said there was no more they could do for me. I was on my own.

A little while after that a friend told me about Naturopath who had helped her husband. The treatment used was "scenar" along with supplements. Desperate to be feeling better, I decided to give it a try. You can read about it on this website http://www.functionalmedicine.co.nz/

Since I developed Graves' my TSH had been stuck on LL, my FT4 and my Free T3 had been high. Gradually my FT4 and Free T3 have slowly come back to normal, however when I began my scenar treatments my TSH had been stuck on **LL** for the duration of my illness.

I had weekly scenar sessions for 14 weeks along with supplements of "Metagenics" Cardio X, Luteol Plus and Thyro Calm. The next time I had my blood test my TSH was 0.96 and the comment written beside it was "Results suggest normal thyroid function". The following blood test came back with the TSH as 1.1 and the comment "Consistent with euthyroidism" . I was ecstatic.

I had also been tested as deficient in Vitamin B12 and Vitamin D, so it could be useful to have these tested. Apparently there is a link between auto immune conditions and Vitamin D deficiency.

It has been a very painful journey to get to this point. As I write this I am still taking my supplements. I now have more energy, am sleeping better and beginning to feel like my old self again. My friends tell me I am looking better. However I still have the odd day when I feel unwell, usually after poor sleep or having overdone it in the garden. So I have learnt to listen to my body as it tells me if I am taking on too much. Thankfully I had no problems with my eyes as do some Graves patients.

I would like to acknowledge the following people's help in my recovery:

My sister, who spent many hours researching for me in her health related reference books.

Svetla's Internet site, and her inspiring emails, that continued to encourage me to keep going, and not give up.

And also to the Great Physician, my Heavenly Father, for he is the true healer.

Ruth McLean

MY JOURNEY THROUGH GRAVES'- by Tanya Miller

I live at Gowrie Junction, a small country village, about 2hrs west of Brisbane, in Queensland, Australia. My occupation: I am a support person in the commercial area of a national telecommunications company, Telstra in Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia. I've been married to my husband Perry for 28yrs and have three children -Christopher, 26 who is a police officer, Shannon, 23 is living and working in London and my youngest daughter is Morgan 16 who is still at school. I'm really keen to start a support group for thyroid sufferers particularly in my hometown of Toowoomba as the nearest support group is in Brisbane.

What does George and Barbara Bush and their dog Millie have in common with me? We all have Hyperthyroidism. I'm a little different though because I'm one of the 5% of hyperthyroid patients who also has thyroid eye disease. Welcome to my world – living everyday with Graves' Disease.

I don't know when my journey started but let's go back about 7 years to 2002. I was 42, working full-time in a very stressful job. I had enough work for three people – I was the administration person, the personal assistant to the Manager as well as the complaints handler. As stressful as my job was, I really enjoyed it because my home life was so depressing; I think I put all my efforts into my work. But I would still be running on adrenalin from the day's activities at 10 pm at night. I would fall into bed completely exhausted but wake up early next day to do the same all over again. My husband was a shift worker married to his job and I had all of my three children still living at home. My son was aged 18; my daughters aged 15 and 8. As well as working full-time, I also was renovating our house, doing about 98% of the household duties including the mowing and the gardening and trying to study. I had no social life.

Weekends were devoted to the house and garden. My middle daughter was going through a rebellious period in her teenage life. My marriage was in tatters and my family gave me very little support around the home. I remember being very angry and very lonely most of the time and it was a horrible time of my life. That year I also lost my very dear uncle to cancer.

The following year my husband had a breakdown after his mother was diagnosed with terminal cancer. For the next 5 months she battled in vain but lost her fight just before Christmas. I took her death very badly, but there was no time for me to grieve. My family were suffering, there was a funeral to organize, a household to run – I was like this robot on auto pilot. I remember very little about it. But the grief did catch up with me about a month later and I collapsed in a heap and took a month off work.

By 2005 our daughter Shannon had already left home and we had left the city and bought a little house on acreage. It was so peaceful with lovely country views. I was happier than where we lived before. New house, new start. I was still very stressed at work but my home life seemed to be improving.

But in January 2007 I had a breakdown and was diagnosed with acute stress, anxiety and depression. I believe now looking back that may have been the beginning of my Graves' disease and I've since read that a mental health breakdown is the first sign. I was off work for about two months, returned to part time work for a little while and was back full time by May. While convalescing I was easily sleeping 10-11 hours a day. I went back to work feeling much better and people commented how well I looked. I was sent to a psychologist and straight away he noticed how fast I spoke and questioned whether I ate fast and walked fast which my family confirmed many times over I did. I was easily excitable, but always anxious and unable to relax. A couple of months later, my husband decided to go on a diet. I decided to join him but I wasn't really committed. To my complete surprise my clothes started to hang on me, people commented how much weight I'd lost. The scales said 8 kgs. How could this be? I hadn't really changed my eating habits; perhaps I was eating a bit more fruit. But then I was going to the toilet a lot more. My bowels would open at least 5 times per day. Anything I ate would just go straight through my body. I was bloated and suffered cramping. I went to the doctor and she diagnosed me with Irritable Bowel Syndrome. She misdiagnosed me. I was to find out later that my body was producing too much thyroid hormone. Graves' Disease was mimicking Irritable Bowel Syndrome, as well as menopausal symptoms... It had started to take over my body.

In August 2007, my father-in-law died. I did not know how much more stress I could take. I was feeling overwhelmed more frequently and started to have panic and anxiety attacks. My body was screaming out for some attention. I would catch any virus that was going around... I'd be sick for a few days, but I would always bounce back. I could not bear to stay in bed once I started feeling a bit better. I could not sit still for a moment. There was so much to do, so little time to do it in and as far as I was concerned sleep was a total waste of time.

I knew I must be heading for menopause because the night sweats had started and my periods were gone. I remember going for my pap smear and the doctor commenting that I was a bit young for menopause. It was around this time the hand tremors started and I immediately thought "oh, now don't tell me I'm getting Parkinson's disease now". I was still a regular at the gym but I started to notice I had lost a lot of upper body strength. I couldn't understand why because I was always particularly strong in that area, but I couldn't lift anywhere near the weights I normally could. I was feeling very fatigued at the time and that's what I put it down to. I was also becoming very breathless on the treadmill. It was a concern to me but again I just thought I may have been training too hard. Little did I know that the excess thyroid was causing muscle wastage resulting in my lack of strength and my shortness of breath. I probably should have been hospitalized at this point because excessive thyroid hormone in your body can prove dangerous to your heart health. I thought I was going crazy with all these strange symptoms that were beginning to appear, but no one picked it up.

In January, 2008 my dearest friend died from a massive heart attack. We hadn't seen a lot of one another over the previous months because of my father-in-law's death and because I just wasn't feeling very well. I went to visit him this one day to find his family just about to leave for his funeral. It was the greatest shock I have ever experienced. I remember almost collapsing in the driveway with grief. I was inconsolable at the funeral and barely remember the service or the days that followed as I was so consumed with grief.

Just a few weeks later, walking past a mirror I caught a glimpse of my eyes and thought they were quite bulging. I can still remember the moment. I'd always had large almond shaped eyes and considered them my best feature. I'd even made a pact with God when I was growing up that if he wanted to disable me take an arm or a leg but please not my sight. I went to a party soon after and met a naturopath who straight away said you're suffering form thyroid disease. "I am"? was my reply. In the back of my mind I had considered that a possibility as thyroid disease was very prevalent on my Mum's side of the family. My Mum, my grandmother, my cousin, my aunty – they all had thyroid disease in one form or another. Mum had noticed the change in my eyes to but hadn't mentioned it.

My eyes had also become very red and irritated but I put it down to the air conditioning at work and sitting in front of a computer all day. It was worse when I was tired. And I was getting a bit sick of the jokes about my all nighters and my wild nights on the red wine. I tried every eye product on the market. I was told I had an allergy, that I was allergic to my makeup and to throw it all out (thank goodness I didn't). Nothing worked.

Very soon after my eyes began to water very badly. Then the worst of all was the gritty feeling in my eyes. If you can imagine every time you blinked it was like your eye was closing over sandpaper. It very nearly drove me mad and in the end it was what drove me to see the doctor. I had researched my symptoms on the Internet and was able to tick almost every box for Graves' Disease. Even down to the tremors I had in my hands which had me thinking I was an early candidate for Parkinson's disease. I also discovered the IBS I had been diagnosed with months earlier was in fact a classic symptom of Graves' Disease.

The doctor immediately organized some blood tests and some eye drops. Sure enough there was no surprise when it was confirmed soon after that I had Graves' Disease and I was immediately put on 5mg Neo mercazole 3 times per day. The doctor was very surprised I had arrived at this point without having been hospitalized given all my symptoms.

He organized appointments with an endocrinologist and an eye specialist I also began regular blood tests. The medication eased my IBS symptoms almost immediately as well as the gritty feeling in my eyes. The hyperthyroidism seemed to have settled but the thyroid eye disease was to continue in earnest. My bulging eyeballs literally throbbed with pain every day. I would have to come home from work and put warm compresses on my eyes to relieve the pain. I became very self conscious of people looking at me. I remember one day when a lady just came up to me out of the blue and said you poor girl you have thyroid disease. I went home and cried and cried. Then there was the little boy who said you have really scary eyes. For the first time I could actually sympathize with those people with disabilities and what they go through.

The eye specialist diagnosed severe thyroid eye disease. At my first visit I asked him when would all this go away? He couldn't answer me. I might have it for life, I could wake up one day and it will be gone. I think I have gone home after every visit and just cried out of sheer frustration. I visit him on a regular basis to ensure my actual eyesight is not being compromised by the disease. So far so good. During the last twelve months I have developed double vision due to my eye muscles not functioning properly. This has really impaired my quality of life. It makes driving difficult especially when I'm tired and affects my work life using a computer on a daily basis. Though the bulging has lessened somewhat in my left eye, it is quite noticeable still in my right eye. I have developed swelling and puffiness around both eyes which makes it quite obvious to people there is something amiss. And it's particularly noticeable to people who haven't seen me in a while. I have difficulty looking sideways at anything on my left side so always ensure I'm sitting on the right when I'm speaking to people. Six months ago I developed this habit of tilting my head to one side so I could focus properly because of my double vision. My eye specialist was most concerned and suggested a temporary prism in one lens of my glasses to correct the problem. Unfortunately he said cosmetically they weren't very appealing and having struggled with my confidence anyway I am still contemplating whether to go ahead with it. I am really tired of people asking me what's wrong with my neck when I tilt it to one side to look at them.

Since I've had Graves' Disease I've avoided the camera like crazy. I'll look back on these years and it will seem as if I disappeared from life because there will be very few photos of me. I hide behind my glasses most days, especially at work because it's just easier than answering questions about my eyes. Just recently I have had the courage to go out in public without my glasses but I always end up putting them on because I'm either tired and my eye begins to bulge or I can't see properly and I need to be wearing them. Either way my confidence has taken a severe battering. I avoid conversations and looking at people I don't know as I'm virtually cross eyed because of the double vision if they're standing directly in front of me. Considering my job involves training people I don't know, I struggle with my appearance everyday.

I have had so many tests and seen so many doctors. I'm frustrated by the lack of hope and yearn that one day I'll leave the appointment with some hope for a cure. I'm better informed than any doctor I have seen thanks to the information available on the Internet I continue to research the disease and arm myself with as much information as possible. Without people like Svetla Bankova and others like her it would be easy for me to wallow in pool of self pity but she gives me hope.

I am mad with God that I don't have a best feature (at the moment) and that I am stuck with these ugly eyes. I'm mad at God that my vision is severely compromised and my confidence has taken a nose-dive and needs rebuilding. But it could have been a lot worse and I needed to learn an important lesson.

A wise woman (Svetla) once said you will learn to love your disease. At the time I thought what a ridiculous statement. But without Graves' I would have continued on this made dash for life, where every living moment was a rush, where the last consideration was for me or my health. The last 18 months have been a huge learning curve for me.

Every morning I put a cold chamomile compress on my eyes for about 10-15 mins. Not only does this reduce some swelling and brightens my eyes for the day but it allows me 10-15 mins during which time I quieten my mind through some meditation before I start my day. At night if I have difficulty falling asleep which is rare, I meditate. Stresses which I would have normally taken to bed with me I firmly leave at the door. There is no room in my life for them anymore. It's not always easy but I try and succeed most times. I sleep on two pillows to reduce swelling and wear an eye mask to bed to keep my eyes closed. My eyes are pushed so far forward that they cannot close properly and without an eye mask my eyes are exposed to irritation. I have to be especially careful on windy days, and always wear sunglasses outside. Air conditioning, computer screens and fans also irritate my eyes and I also suffer when I'm flying due to the dry air in the cabin. I carry my eye drops with me everywhere. I have had such quality sleep since wearing the mask that now both daughters wear masks to bed now.

I ensure that at least once a week I attend a yoga class. I try to get at least 8 hours a sleep a night, more if possible and on the weekends I try to nap for an hour or two in the afternoon. Without question good quality sleep and rest will help you to contain the stress of Graves' Disease on your body. And this is from someone who always thought sleep was a waste of time. I still battle with fatigue and there are days when I can't get out of bed but they are becoming less and I no longer feel guilty when I ring up work to say I won't be in. Tiredness will also precede an anxiety attack.

I go to gym at least three times a week. I concentrate on weight training and some cardio instead of the other way around because too much cardio fatigues me and I am getting my upper body strength back again.

I do not have a full agenda each day as I tire very easily. I simply refuse to fit in everything that I did before. The housework has gone by the wayside, as has the mowing and the gardening but superwoman doesn't live here anymore. I'm giving up the pleasures of a perfect house and garden for the importance of my health. I have made these subtle changes to my life for the better that I never would have done if it hadn't been for Graves.

All the weight I lost initially from Graves I have put back on and then some. Fatigue causes me to eat more and activates my sweet tooth. I suspect menopause hasn't helped either. I have been seeing a doctor who specializes in thyroid, Dr Allan Hadley in Brisbane, Australia who treats holistically. He has put me on a host of vitamins and I certainly feel the difference when I'm not on them. I've also been taking Flaxseed Oil which seems to make my eyes look a lot clearer.

Every organ in our body requires the thyroid hormone to function normally. All the doctors I had seen organized the same round of blood tests, but Dr Hadley was the only one who drilled down further and discovered one of my thyroid glands wasn't even functioning. My body had been working at half strength for a very long time. It is so hard but very important to find a doctor who specializes in thyroid disease.

Where I live in a large regional city in Australia, Graves' is not that common. In fact I was the first Graves' patient that my doctor had ever encountered and I remember other doctors coming in to see me because they'd never seen it before.

Without any doubt despite what doctors might say I believe Graves' Disease is caused by stress. Stress will kill you and it's responsible for so many illnesses. In a way I was lucky to get Graves'. My chances of getting it were higher than most because it was so prevalent in my family. I've noticed that different foods will aggravate my condition. I only drink decaffeinated coffee, I rarely drink alcohol. I'm trying hard to reduce sugar and bread in my diet. It is very important to quiet the mind and body through yoga and meditation. Graves' disease is an auto-immune disease so anything that will reduce the inflammation in my body, be it diet, rest or relaxation holds the key to an improvement in my condition. I believe there are so many undiagnosed people out there that were like me. We need to educate everybody about thyroid disease. There is such a large focus on cancer and heart disease – what about thyroid disease?

It is easy for me to slip back into my old habits, but overall I take life at a much slower pace than I ever did. I've learnt to enjoy sleeping in, I see flowers blooming in our garden that I never noticed before. I spend more time with my family. I avoid stressful situations at all costs. My family, God bless them have suffered, particularly my husband as I went undiagnosed for so long. They, more than anyone have noticed the greatest changes in me. I'm still battling thyroid eye disease. I still have my bad days when it's all doom and gloom but life is probably better than it's ever been and I've got Graves to thank for that.

POSTSCRIPT. I recently met with my eye specialist as I was due for my 6 monthly checkup. After I advised him that I'd had some near misses whilst driving he did some extra tests. He advised me that my double vision was twice as bad since my previous visit and he declared me unmedically fit to drive. This is just another hurdle I've had to jump. My work involves driving, I live out of town with virtually no public transport and now my husband has to do all the running around. I'm wondering whether this is the Higher Force of the Universe at work again sending me yet another message to slow down or perhaps get off the road before I had an accident.

I now have no option but to get the prism in my glasses. I'm not looking forward to it at all but if it means I get my independence back again and I'm able to drive and drive safely it's worth it.

I have recently turned 50 and decided to come out of the closet with my Graves Disease and tell the world. I have been pleasantly surprised by the offers of assistance. In particular I have been approached by a work colleague who has put me onto a vision therapist. I've not heard of them before but apparently they are big business in the United States. I might add mainstream doctors including eye specialists do not support their methods but I'm willing to give it a go. If you want to know the outcome or just have a chat please email me on delica@bigpond.com. I would really love to hear from you.

P.S. Finally I would like to thank my family for their patience, love and support during my Graves' journey. They keep a tight rein on me when I start to wander back into my old ways.

We have all been to hell and back and now we all understand why. xo

Hyperthyroidism Recoverer- by Carol Blake-Hodge

I am a single mother of 4. Three young prince and one princess. I am 60 years old today, 29 September 2009. Presently, I reside in St. Croix, US Virgin Islands as a Cultural Heritage Arts professional.

I became aware of my glandular problem back in 1986. My doctor diagnosed my ear and throat and said I needed to get it checked. I did not accept his diagnosis, so I did nothing about it. Three months after giving birth to my last child (October 26, 1988), my then physician was concerned and sent me to have a test done at Crawford Long Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia. In the space of two days from the first test on my thyroid, the gland had grown to the size of a small grapefruit. I was told that I needed to have surgery. I was diagnosed with *Hyperthyroidism.*

I was attending medical school at that time and had the opportunity to do research on the *Thyroid gland.* I was told by my doctor that I had to have an operation. I agreed that something had to be done, so I signed into the hospital thereafter to have the procedure done. Needless to say, the operation went well but left me feeling cheated and puzzled over the 2 hours of my life while being operated on and the recovery period. I could not remember anything . This plagued me for quite sometime. I was placed on Synthroid- 0.5mg., which I was told to take daily to increase my chances of survival. Some years later, in 1991, I moved back to the Virgin Islands and continued using the Synthroid.

From the year 2000 to 2006, I began experiencing severe headaches, palpitation of the heart, memory laps, stress, TMJ and off-balanced menstrual cycle. I felt like I was loosing myself into nothingness.

Finally, one day at work I decided to surf the net in hopes that I could retrieve information on Hyperthyroidism and cures. Surprisingly, I came across Svetla Bankova's story on Graves' Disease and Hyperthyroidism. I read her story and decided to get a downloaded copy of her book. Along with her book I received weekly motivations, insight and encouragement from her through my email. This was really good for me, and I looked forward to each email with great anticipation of all that she would have to share with me.

I began to look at my life differently...What I wanted and expected, where I wanted to go and to be; most importantly, what is truly best for me and how can I get there. While working on all this through prayer and hearing the penetrating and inspiring words of God—To bring about change: You have to do something that you have never done and *Svetla "It's a lifestyle!* I gave it my all. Then my doctor retired and I had a new one.

This Physician sent me to have lab work done, and the results turned out to be …. The dosage of Synthroid was too high causing the medical problems I mentioned earlier. The dosage was changed to 0.08mgs. After taking the first pill, my menstrual cycle came back and I called to let the doctor in on it. I never had the opportunity to speak to him. The nurse decided on her own diagnosis and prescription. All this was based on what her girlfriend experienced. To say the least, I was really ticked-off and that was my last visit to that doctor's office. I became very skeptical of synthetic drugs after this and came to a drastic decision...I'm going cold turkey; and I did.

I was visiting a Naturopathic Physician at the time who specializes in other areas of health, including *Pain Management*. She experienced my frustration and asked what the problem was. When I told her she began to laugh, but concluded by showing me in a health and healing book that what I was told concerning the pills and my life was a lie. Somehow that day it was all I needed to hear and I told her of Svetla and the lifestyle changes that Svetla had told me I had to make if I wanted to begin enjoying life for me and my family.

It's been 3 years since I have not taken Synthroid, I'm headache free. Healthy and meaningful conversations are at it's highest, and my hobby has turned into a profitable business. And so is my lifestyle and what goes into my mouth.

Yes, there are times that I indulge in something that I should not eat, but with God's help and time and my willingness to be true to myself and God's word (*My body is a temple for the Lord),* I will prevail.

I truly feel blessed, because I have two Naturopathic Health Care Consultants that has my best interest at heart here in St. Croix, US Virgin

Islands, and I receive much care and guidance from both, together with Svetla's motivational emails that I continue to receive to date.

It's my prayer that God's covering protection be over each of them and their families and practice to include the lives of those the Creator has and continues to send along their path.

God Bless!
Carol Blake-Hodge

Khalisa’s Story – by Khalisa Kitz

I grew up in Texas and as a child I most loved being outdoors or with animals. I felt love for others, close to God,the angels and the unseen world.

In the 80's I fell in love with, then moved to the beautiful hills of northwest Arkansas where I have lived now for 30 years. I have two children, a son and a daughter, and since 1990 I’ve been a single parent. My daughter has special needs and still must live with me.

After being self employed for 14 years as a free lance artist, organizer, housekeeper, and landscaper, I now work at the University of Arkansas as an administrative specialist. I enjoy my job and the people I work with.

I am most happy in nature or creating art or being with my family, friends, or co-workers. The feeling of love for others and the closeness to God has sometimes been buried under the cares and stresses of the world, but I know it's there. I am committed to being in close touch to the divine being inside myself and all around me, and try to constantly remember that each day and in each experience.

I am now 3 years into treating Graves’ Disease with natural alternatives only, and I am another person who is living proof it can happen with persistence and support.

5 years ago, after being really sick and totally mystified regarding what was happening to me, I got lucky and had some blood work done (as recommended by a wise and concerned doctor at a planned parenthood clinic) that showed I had very elevated TPO antibodies (>1000) and very low TSH. My personal doctor refused to do anything about it (I’ve since changed doctors, believe me!)

In November 2006 I presented with my right eye bulging, not digesting anything, very anxious, thin and exhausted. I finally found an endocrinologist who gave me a name for what I was struggling with Grave’s Disease.

Not one to ever rush off to the doctor; I spent weeks glued to my computer researching everything I could find on the illness. Over time, I began to turn many of the puzzle pieces of my life face up and now I've put more and more of them together into a coherent picture.

I am 57 years old, and for 17 years have been the single mother to a darling yet challenging daughter with special needs. When I was researching Graves', I read that many tri-athletes develop Graves; I decided my life with my daughter was my Triathlon!

My earliest symptoms began in the 5th grade. My mother was a health nut, and insisted on feeding me a milkshake for breakfast before school consisting of milk, one raw egg, and Carnation instant breakfast. I would go to school, throw up and then be sent home. At home I was given Thorazine, which I found out in my research was a known trigger for Graves. At the same period of my life, Mom was giving me dropperfuls of Lugol's Solution in orange juice. Lugol's is pure iodine. By the time I was in high school I was having major bouts of strep throat infections. I believe the antibiotics that were pumped into me then ended up causing greater and greater difficulty digesting, and eventually leaky gut syndrome. At the same time, I began having Irritable Bowel Syndrome. When I was only 25 I tried going off of dairy products, and that ended years and years of constipation, throat and ear infections along with huge antibiotic use.

When I was 30, I received a crushed neck vertebra injury in a rear end collision. During my later research, I found references to injuries near the thyroid as being another trigger for Graves'.

Beginning around 1994 when my daughter was 7, I started losing my stamina and became more anxious. Digesting food was hard, and sleep just never let me feel refreshed. I had been teased for years because of strange food sensitivities. I felt something was going on, so began to seek medical help. In one test, it was determined that I had borderline Mal-absorption Syndrome. In another test, I was injected with iodine dye to see if the problem was my gall bladder. Shortly after that, I had to drink barium for an upper and lower GI test. I believe these last two tests really sent me over the edge.

By 2000, I developed a large growth on the outside of my descending colon called a lymphangioma, usually associated with inability to digest fat. My surgeon seemed surprised that I was very thin. In 2004, my daughter had a psychotic reaction to a drug called Flagyl, and had to be hospitalized for a month in a mental hospital.

Part of the reason for my daughter's illness had been caused by Junk food machines that were everywhere in her school. She could get foods I would never let her have at home. So after her recovery, I took her to a local health class to try to get her some better instruction in healthy eating. (With teenagers, sometimes being told the facts by somebody besides your parent is helpful).

The instructor recommended we start using lemon flavored cod liver oil in smoothies with raw eggs and strawberries to mask the flavor. The first time I tried it, I also tried sardines the same day for lunch, also at the instructor's urging. That is the day I had a Thyroid Storm, although at the time I had no name for it. I threw up for hours, my heart rate went off the chart and I couldn't sleep for 3 days, even with sleeping pills brought over by a friend.

It was about a year later that I received the diagnosis of Graves. By then, I was so depressed and exhausted, it was nearly impossible to do anything. As a single mother, however, I could not give up.

When I was told that the treatment of "Choice" was to drink radioactive iodine to kill the thyroid or to have it surgically removed, I thought… "If the problem is the immune system, then why in the world kill the Victim!!!" HUH? That sounded insane to me.

So I started researching online. I came across The Graves Support Board, an online support group for people with Thyroid disorders. I learned so much from that site, and was able to piece together for myself my own support. Through that site, I found others, like a woman named Pam Briess, who had also started a website with her natural alternatives for healing Graves'.

I began having twice weekly acupuncture treatments, and within only 4 months my TSH was in the normal range. I did those treatments at that rate, and after about 5 or 6 months, no longer had bulging eyes or many of the other uncomfortable symptoms. At that point I began to do treatments only every other week, and now have had not needed for them for about a year! I would go if I needed to. (The Chinese herbs helped immensely, especially as one of the predisposing factors in my body's problem ended up being a deeply seated microbial problem, like viral and bacterial infection that had gone on for years undetected and kept robbing me of vitality. Once I got that under control, I really started having energy.)

I quit eating wheat flour, seaweed, and ocean fish, and using iodized salt. I stopped eating out. That made me sad, but I felt better. I've learned to make delicious food based on fruit, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, beans, tilapia, tempeh, and rice milk. I drink green tea and purified water.

I began to realize that all the years I'd thought I was neurotic were behind me. I actually had a dream in which I woke up in a mental hospital and a kind loving doctor had given the order to release me saying “You are NOT crazy! You don’t need to be here!”

I am lucky to live where there is a very good Naturopath who has been able to help me develop a very healthy yummy diet with the appropriate supplements. I have gained weight again, and love running into old friends who say “Oh, my gosh, you look all better!” After not being able to work more than a few hours a day, I am now working a full 40 hour a week job at a university Animal Science Dept. as a secretary. I love my job, and have just now celebrated being here 1 year.

I am not sure if one develops an auto immune disorder, if one can ever be free of the challenge of it. But I do know I am not going to be sick from it. It is perhaps a lifelong challenge for me.

I had begun to suspect there were some mental predispositions for Graves’ when I was reading all the comments from other Graves’ sufferers online. I noticed a lot of those people were like doormats for their family, friends, or co-workers. That was one symptom I noticed about myself. I also noticed many of them had problems with lack of self esteem or self love. My healing process picked up speed when I started to own up to my need to heal there too. I have been learning how to care and speak up for myself; speak my truth with kindness but firmness. That often takes a lot of quiet time to find out what that truth is.

I am also a very creative person, and I had to see how important it was to gift myself with time to be creative… It is not selfish to take time for quiet, inward time or for creative pursuits.

I still have to watch out for the effects of stress and worry. My stamina is more tentative than before this happened to me. I cannot eat off my diet; I’ve tried many times now, and realize it’s just not worth it. I no longer feel bitter that I can’t live like those around me. I’m just grateful to know who I am and how I need to live. I feel happiness and joy again.

Our culture in the U.S. doesn’t’ support us taking time for ourselves. It doesn’t reward us for saying NO. So we must allow ourselves time to learn this on our own. The good news is there are plenty of people to help share information, love, and support. And the great news is - it works if you work. Trust yourself and never give up.

I have decided that a one size fits all kind of treatment won't work. Everyone's body is their own riddle and part of the learning experience with Graves’ is to have to learn to trust your own intuition and ability to feel into what is happening in your own body. And that takes awhile to develop.

I'm just grateful to be on the road to knowing who I am and how I must live

The other thing I learned is that our body is constantly changing as we age, and with the seasons too. We must be able to listen and feel, and trust our inner knowing. We find something that worked a year ago, we don't need now, and we may need to adjust and try new ways of nourishing and healing ourselves.

I wish you well!

Very sincerely, Khalisa

My life with Graves Disease- By Linda Chadwick Mills

Linda Mills 54 has lived in the mountains of Northeast Georgia for over 20 years. Divorced mother of 3 daughters, 2 grandchildren, her mom, her boyfriend, her dog Sammy and living with disabilities from injuries that she sustained in a tornado that hit the resort where she worked in 1992.

The past 10 years she has been the caregiver to a very special needs child 24/7. She has been very active in her community with volunteering, disability advocacy, politics and many other projects.

She has spent the last 17 years looking for natural alternative treatments for her old injuries and has even been told by 1 of 16 specialists that she was just too mean to die. But, in the past year she's not so sure she's meaner than Grave's Disease. The answer to that remains to be seen

This vicious disease moves so fast you don't have much time to put up a defense. I had it in my eyes and thought my chances of being crooked eyed might go down if had thyroid surgery. My thyroid would swell at night and as I waited for my surgery it would block my airway and I couldn't breathe.

I was lucky to have found the right surgeon. The surgery went very well. I cannot express how important it is to have the right surgeon. I had minimal scaring and healed quickly. My voice was not affected. I wasn't even hoarse. I ate solid food immediately. I felt wonderful and I had my mind back. Little did I know this was just the beginning of a battle that I would have to fight alone.

I had started losing weight and really feeling bad. I went to my family Dr. and told him I felt terrible. I had various health complications due to catastrophic injuries I received in a tornado 16 years before so I never felt good and lived with pain every day. This was different. We did tests and my thyroid had been high normal for over a year so an endocrinologist was needed. The best we had in our area had a 3 month waiting list. I went to a different doctor and was told I had hyperthyroidism and needed RAI treatment immediately. I went running out of there as fast as I could. I already knew what I needed and it wasn't that.

I cried and cried because my family didn't understand what was wrong and everyone thought I was depressed, moody, menopausal, etc. My eyes got worse. One bulged out and the other one the lid did not close right. I went to another endocrinologist and she tested me for Graves' disease with a positive result. She put me on a medicine that had 16 letters in it that had a lot of side effects. My hair started falling out, my teeth started breaking off, I couldn't talk to anyone because I couldn't remember my thoughts. No one wanted to be around me. I could barely bathe myself. I couldn't get my meals, stand for very long or answer the telephone or drive. I had tremors so bad I couldn't even sign my name. My anxiety level was so high I couldn't stand myself.

Finally, my turn came on the waiting list for the Doctor I had been waiting for. I saw her one day and was in the surgeon's office the next. Two weeks of some even nastier medicine and I was in surgery. Then I became the difficult patient. No, there was no cancer. Yes, you are supposed to be on a hormone hasn't someone called you yet? That stuff makes you feel really yucky. Again I go back to my Primary Doctor. I feel like I want to die. Not the depressed I want to kill myself feeling but please let me die in my sleep because I have no quality of life. More tests. Your calcium and B vitamins are real low let's Supplement that.

Well, my hair is falling out. That's normal. You will get some thinning. Several weeks later I call back. 25% of my hair is gone. Oh, that's normal get some biotin. I call back. 50% of my hair is gone. That's normal, it will stop soon. Yeah when it's all gone. Finely, the doctor's office got so aggravated they sent me to a dermatologist. 75% of my hair mass was gone. He was mad. The next week I was due back at the endocrinologist's. She says you are the 1 that called so much aren't you.

My blood work had been delayed and my hormone dosage was not changed for 3 weeks. So the dosage was adjusted and I was sent on my miserable way. 3 days later I received 3 letters in the mail from the specialist. I have a severe vitamin D deficiency. 50,000 units once a week for 8 weeks and then once a month. My thyroid hormone was double what it needed to be and it was adjusted. New hair is growing and I can stay out of bed a few hours longer a day. I'm due back at the endocrinologist's in a few weeks.

The stress from the economic crisis contributed to my illness but also did my daily life. I got sick in December 2008, diagnosed with Graves' disease mid January 2009, operated on March 25,2009. My life was in a mess and I pitched the biggest hissi fit. My best friend and my sister deleted me from facebook, all 3 of my grown daughters weren't speaking to me, my mother wasn't speaking to me, my boyfriend wanted to get rid of me but I was too sick. Only my dog stuck by me. Oh! And I forgot, I was crazy! I was so mad at everyone for being so mean and insensitive and non-supportive it took me weeks to get over it.

So, here I am age 54 with Grave's disease. No one calls to see how I'm doing. Most think I am lying about how sick I am. Information on the Internet is so scarce I've even been sent information my friends researched that indicated Grave's disease wasn't serious at all.

My family is more sensitive and kind and we have a less stressful life.

Mostly they just ignore me. I'm not invited to most get togethers because I will probably be sick. But, if they need something surely I can't feel that bad. I know that you need a real good support system to fight this. Well, I don't have one. I know that I can't be the only person in the world that has family and friends that can't or won't support them. It is a long lonely road.

When I had thyroid storms I took it out on the bill collectors instead of the people around me. No one and I mean no one can understand unless you've been there.

09/24/09

“Symptoms”- by Jennifer Gunter, from a small town in Northern California

My name is Jennifer Gunter. I am a 30 year old wife and stay at home mom of 2 kids, ages 2 1/2 and 11. I was diagnosed "hyperthyroid secondary to graves disease" in Mar 2009. My eyes were my first symptom. Since March I have been educating myself in matters of the thyroid and overall health. I have received a lot of advice from Svetla Bankova and I am thankful for her website and books. Without them I would be on a lot of pills that in my opinion are just as bad as hyperthyroidism. I am taking the all natural approach with positive results, small results but positive. I feel that Dr.s have lost their humanity and compassion for people who are sick. I am very angry at this disease for effecting my eyes, the rest of the symptoms I could hide or make excuses for, but I cannot do that for my eyes. I know one day I will be thankful for the journey, but not today. The poemI wrote has no rhyme or reason behind it other than I was trying to get all my symptoms in it, symptoms that I have and think about multiple times everyday. I am not a writer and have not written anything since high school.

Thanks Svetla
Jennifer Gunter

Symptoms

I never knew you existed.
I never thought something like you, could have this much control over my every move,
My every thought. My entire being.

You came into my life, like a tornado sweeping me off my feet.
Leaving my legs to weak to stand on.

Leaving me like a school girl,
addicted, obsessing, searching,
constantly wanting more.
Constantly wanting perfection.

Feeling your presence
from my skin to my soul.
The torture
Haunting and taunting my every move.
While I dream and while I wake

The pounding in my chest.

Face flushed as I try to keep you hidden.
You and I together forever. But never to be seen in public.
When will you arrive?

Imagine all the stares we get.
Holding the pressure points, the breathing the sweating
Ugh, they don’t understand.
They don't know you like I do.

They don't know its the little things that turn you on.
A look, a taste, a smell.

One look into my eyes can send you over the edge. Knowing the beauty behind the disgust.
And a taste so sweet, so salty, so synthetic.
Will bring you to your knees.

And the calming of all smells can bring fire and rage
To calm you and soothe you like a field of lavender will make your heartburn with no way to put it out.

I can not live without you. You complete me. Without you id be lost.
Severe depression, medication, would be my normal function.

But with you I cannot live. I cannot live with the racing heart
the sweating hands, the bulging eyes when your around. O the weight I must carry.
The sleepless nights and tiring days.

Just breath. Because you consume my every thought.
I must choose to make our affair a memory
to leave the passion behind.
I will wear your memories with pride. I promise never to forget you. Your memory will make me, me.

Please let me go now

Your friends are starting to talk. Strangers are staring at us.
For all I see is pain. When my heart beats all I feel is fear. When I think about you my only thought is Horrid! ~

I have Graves' disease- it does not have me- by Leslie DeMeo

Leslie DeMeo is 50 years old and lives in Windsor, California. She has been married to a wonderful man for 21 years; and have two teenage children. She is a part time preschool teacher; full time office manager for our Construction Co.

My journey began a little over two years ago, I had run out of energy and had no ambition. With two young kids that was not acceptable. At age 48 my Dr. ordered tests which to my surprise showed Graves' Disease.

After the shock of being told that, I was sent to an Endocrinologist who did not give me many options. I should have taken matters into my own hands. But I went with the decision of the Dr. to have my thyroid dissolved. At that point we played with my medication for the next two years. I started to gain weight, eyes started to bulge depression set in, and I have the irritated rough skin on my shins.

My primary care Dr. has tried to help me deal with all the many medical conditions I was experiencing, she has now sent me on to specialists. I was feeling like I was going no where except down. I did feel like I was now a different person. I was withdrawn from my many friends, I felt like I wanted to hide all the time.

Being a preschool teacher even wore me out. After buying and reading "Life Manual for Graves Disease and Hyperthyroidism", I now know I am not alone as I had been feeling. There are thousands of Graves' patients with the same symptoms. I have learned to turn this disease around, I will not let this disease take over my body. I do not keep everything to myself anymore.

I am open about what's going on with my body. I talk to my husband about everything I am feeling. It helps to share everything..

I have gone to a Dermatologist and now have my bumpy rough shins under control. I am seeing a new Endocrinologist who seems to have my medicine in order, my eye Dr. and sent me on to a specialists we are working on keeping my eyes from getting any bigger. But the best thing I have done is to learn to relax, I am now only a substitute at the Preschool, I work for my husband and our business, office work when needed. I work out on a regular basis, I take baths almost every morning,(what a great way to start the day) I am learning to meditate, I am looking for some classes with yoga and meditation.

I even changed our bedroom around, we now have a pretty soothing bed set, we painted the room with relaxing colors. I am sleeping much better. I wake up happy and am keeping my stress down. I watch what I eat, that has not helped me lose weight, however I will keep trying. Thanks to all the suggestions in the book, I take flax oil tabs twice a day, I take sam-e that helps with the blues feeling. I have scheduled an appointment with an acupuncturist I am told she can help with the pressure behind my eyes, with weight gain as well as with energy. I have Graves' disease- it does not have me....

Leslie DeMeo

My experience with Graves' Disease by Loren Duggan.

I am from the Gold Coast Queensland Australia. I am 67 years of age. I was diagnosed with Graves' Disease at 63 years. I have been a motor mechanic most of my life. I have always been very active- my wife says overactive which seem to get worse & worse till I was eventually diagnosed with Graves'.

In 2005 one morning my right eye was very swollen & after many visits to my G.P. & an eye specialist a CT scan helped an ophthalmologist to diagnose Graves' disease. I received treatment from an endocrinologist which involved taking 50mg daily of atenolol to help cope with feeling very vague & losing my train of thought for about 6 months. As a blocker to the false messages going to my thyroid he prescribed 10mg of Neo-Mercazole twice daily which was monitored closely by regular blood tests. The quantity of this medication was gradually reduced over the next three & a half years to zero as my symptoms settled down.

My symptoms consisted of a racing heart beat tremors of my hands tongue & jaw, eyes watering constantly, quite bad double vision, increase in hair growth, protruding eye balls, impatient, aggressive, panic attacks & I was so hyper that my energy supply was endless.

Add to this my being very self conscious because of my appearance, life was not too enjoyable. While the medication seemed to stop the progress of the symptoms I really noticed the symptoms start to regress once I worked on my diet. The information I used came from "Life manual for Graves Disease & Hyperthyroidism" and information off the Internet from others who had success.

My present situation is I've learnt to avoid stress to a large degree. I avoid caffeine, sugar, any food out of the ocean because of iodine content, eat plenty of green veggies especially broccoli, try & get good rest and visit the endocrinologist at 6 month intervals with a blood test so he can monitor the situation.

My eyes have been back to normal for a year and a half now according to an ophthalmologist I visit on a 6 monthly basis. My other symptoms are about 80% under control and I am very thankful for my quality of life that I enjoy.

Loren Duggan

Graves' Disease story- by Tiffany Bryson

My name is Tiffany Bryson and I am 35 years old and live in Harmony, Pennsylvania with my husband, and 5 kids. I stay at home with the kids and also write Christian music & perform occasionally.

My name is Tiffany Bryson, and I was diagnosed with Grave's Disease and Hyperthyroidism just this year- in May. In June, I had to start taking PTU & get blood work done every 6 weeks. I was a nursing mom & had hoped to continue nursing the baby until he was a little over a year- but was told to stop.

That was a big disappointment for me. I love that bonding time! In the middle of September I took a pregnancy test & it was positive! I had not had a menstrual cycle for a long time, so this was a bit of a surprise for me. I talked to my doctor right away & they told me to keep taking the PTU- that it is considered safe during pregnancy. I was unsure even though they told me this. I kept having a feeling that I shouldn't be taking it.

Then I went to the OB/Gyn and she said PTU is not completely safe especially in the 1st trimester. I could not in good conscience keep taking it. I informed my doctor that I am not taking it right now. I must follow my conscience!

They weren't happy with my decision & told me of things that "could potentially happen" if I don't take it. I am a believer in Jesus and His healing power though.

The Bible says that God perfects all that concerns me. Jesus said in Mark 11 that you can have what you say & you can have what you ask for in prayer. I know that I will not lose this baby & I trust God completely. This is my 6th child. I did have one miscarriage after the second baby- so I know what it feels like when it starts. I have had that feeling several times during each of the subsequent pregnancies- but I quoted God's Word that says I will not lose my fruit before it's time. (My fruit being the fruit of my womb.) Each time the pain left & I did not lose any more babies.

God is a good God! He is taking care of me and this new baby. I hope this will help someone out there! I get my strength and hope from God’s Word & you can too if you believe!

(I just had blood work done again and this time my levels were in the normal range! I have been off of the PTU for a month and a half now and am doing fine! I give God the praise for this!)

Tiffany Bryson

My Graves’ Story- by Deb Filly

I was hit by a “freight train”, at least that is how my doctor described it. It was May of 2003 and I was finally in the office of a doctor who was called an Endocrinologist, I’ll call him doctor G. I ended up here because I could not sleep at night with the blood pounding in my ears so loud I thought my husband next to me could hear it. I had gone first to a primary care doctor, who said my heart rate was up significantly and he thought he would be sending me to a cardiologist. My father had had severe heart problems, so I just thought it ran in the family. Thank goodness he took my blood as well that day, as that was why I was referred to this thyroid specialist.

When this doctor G first started to explain to me that I had a classic case of Graves’ Disease, it was déjà vu all over again. I knew nothing of the disease, in fact had never heard of it, and barely even knew what a thyroid gland was. This was not the first time I had been hit with the “freight train”. Back in the early 90’s I had accidentally smashed my ulner nerve in my right elbow (where your funny bone is) while at work. I developed a “hot” nerve and within six months had to have surgery on it to save any use of it. I was out of work for nearly three years and some time after surgery was in such pain I had to go to the emergency room. It felt like somebody was hammering a nail through my shoulder- turns out I had R.S.D. (reflexive sympathetic dysfunction/dystrophy). This was all news to me, found out it has no cure, is very difficult to live with and the doctors are not sure whether it comes from the original trauma of the accident or the surgery, which the body can also react to as a trauma. I was lucky to have a very good attorney who got me to good pain specialists and physical therapists, who did not believe in narcotics to manage the pain. Eventually I got past that life changing event, though I was never quite as active with my horses and other activities as I once had been. Then about five years later, another “freight train” came along. I had been involved in a minor car accident, where the air bag deployed and split right in my face.

About two months later I developed a lump on my breast bone that moved to my right breast over time. I finally had to have a biopsy, and sure enough it was breast cancer. At least I had heard of that one, but I was sure it was caused from the air bag exploding in my face with those horrible gases which I had breathed in, as nobody in my family ever had cancer. I had a mastectomy and then some serious rounds of chemo, but none of that slowed me down much, as it was, from the arm injury, I could only work 20 hours a week.

I was doing great, in fact, so great that in 2001 I met a man that I married later that same year. I knew that he had had a difficult childhood living with abuse, but I did not know that he had unresolved mental and behavioral issues. Soon after we were married, life became stressful. I did not notice some little red flags to my physical health that starting occurring soon thereafter. The first one was I could no longer get on my horse from the ground, even when the horse was saddled and I had a stirrup to aid me in mounting. I put it down to not being in as good of physical shape as I had been most of my life. Even when going through chemo I had played softball and still rode my horses. As time went on and my stress in the marriage intensified, so did the symptoms, but now it included my mental state as well. Not only was I tired all the time, I got anxious and had a hard time focusing.

December of 2002 my husband had agreed to go see a psychiatrist, but when the appointment time came, he would not go, so I went. That doctor thought from my descriptions that my husband may have been bi-polar or paranoid, if not both, and he put me on an anti-anxiety drug called Lexapro, which helped me focus and cope. I was only on that for about 6 months and never did go back to the shrink or go into therapy, though in hind sight, maybe I should have. In late, January of 2003, my husbands' sister was brutally murdered and life went to "hell in a hand basket" very quickly. He was overwhelmed, in denial and then became mentally and emotionally abusive. I was crying at work, a new full time job in an industry where I had no previous experience. I was even shaking all the time, my eyes would water so bad to the point I could not see the computer screen I had to work on, I thought it was because we were in a new building with new carpet and it was the chemicals I was reacting to. Then by May of 2003, I was a complete basket case, and I believe, the culmination of all the STRESS is what triggered my Graves' Disease.

So after the definite diagnosis of Graves', and the realization that yet again, my life had just changed rails, I at least had hope that the future would be manageable. Dr. G put me on 30 mgs of Tapazole daily along with some heart medication. Within a month I was feeling much better, though my married life did not improve. I was monitored every couple of months with blood tests and doctors appointments. I had my eyes checked for the "bug" eyes characteristic of the disease and learned as much as I could about Graves. I found out Barbara Bush has Graves' and it is probably that fact that helped some research for this disease. I was told to drink as much water as I possibly could, to prevent dehydration, and to eat protein to help build my muscle tone back, not to use stairs (though I have 11 in my house and the kitchen is downstairs) and to get as much sleep/rest as I wanted. I did what I could with the suggestions, even though I had always considered myself a healthy eater and was of normal weight for my height, at first I did gain about ten pounds, maybe since I don't really like water much, I drank sports drinks instead.

My doctor told me now since the medication had the thyroid under control and it was no longer over active, my body was not going a hundred miles an hour. I did have the "sweats" in a bad way though, but who could tell if that was from the Graves' and/or from being in menopause, which was instant after the chemo. Probably the same with any mood changes and the fact that I had difficulty with intercourse, again who could say for sure if it was Graves disease, stress, a bad marriage, menopause or a combination of all the above? Well this stew went on for awhile with a little up and down of all of it. Then doctor G decided it was time to kill the thyroid gland so "we" could manage the disease better.

So I took the radioactive iodine pills to "kill" my thyroid production, with the understanding it would take about 6 months to find out if the procedure had worked properly, then I would be on a synthetic thyroid hormone for the rest of my life. It did not work, and as luck would have it, I was also out of work, as I had been laid off from my job and my health insurance went with it.

Eventually I was able to get on my husbands health insurance and was back on the Tapazole, though at a much lower dose. Then doctor G said we needed to redo the radioactive iodine treatment to render the thyroid gland inactive. I was very unprepared for that and asked why again, when it had not worked the first time. He explained that it does not work the first time in about 40% to 50% of patients. As this was news to me, I choose not to try it again and instead found another endocrinologist who did not recommend the procedure and believed we could regulate it with medication. He explained that most doctors want to "kill" the thyroid gland because it is easier to manage someone who is in "hypo" mode as opposed to "hyper" mode (which is what occurs with Graves').

I'll call him Dr. Z, who came highly recommended, yet I must say does not have the same chatty beside manner as Dr. G did, but is very business like and up to date on his profession. He had me do a bone density test and then I found out I also have osteoporosis, so added daily to the 10mg of Tapazole, were 2,000IU of vitamin D, along with regular multi-vitamins, and a monthly dose of Boniva. After a year and another bone density test, the Graves was under "control" and the osteoporosis was as well. In late 2005 my husband left me, without support and unemployed. I did manage to convince him to keep me on his health insurance from his job.

A couple months later I was able to get a full time job, but it did not offer health insurance, that lasted until the company was sold and moved out of state which was mid 2006. Then in late 2007 my husband filed for divorce and the games began. I went back on the Tapazole for the anxiety from all the harassment. I continued to be unemployed as the state of the economy crashed and I was forced to borrow money against the equity in my house which I had owned many years before getting married. I also lived on credit cards and racked up more debt there. Finally at the end of April 2009 we were legally divorced, though I received some monetary compensation, my health insurance was gone. I had previously explained to Dr. Z that this might happen, so he gave me enough prescriptions to get me through about a year.

So that brings me to the present, just going into fall, still unemployed, broke, with credit cards closed and at their limit, and no health insurance. If it were not for the support and caring of some wonderful friends, I don’t know where I’d be. Health wise I am doing OK, and continue to take my meds and vitamins.

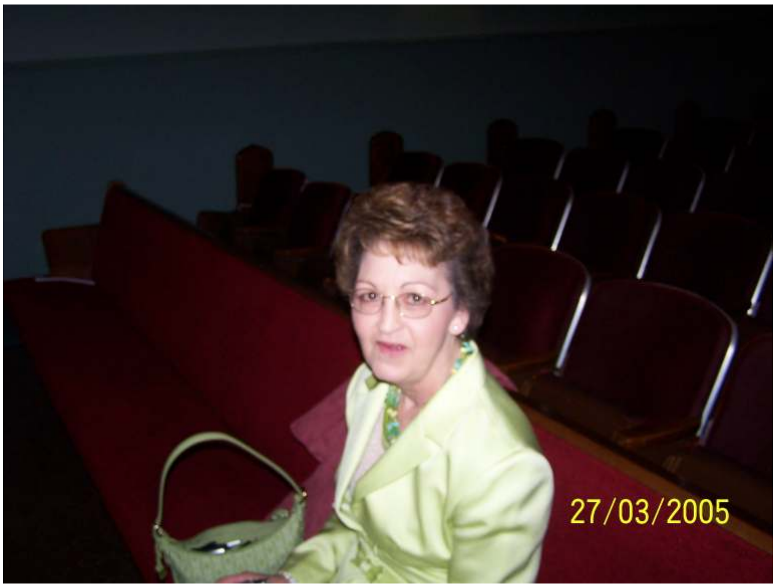
Most of the symptoms have subsided, though I still sweat quite a bit, but I have found if I only wear cotton clothes it does help. I also sometimes get dry eyes which drops help with, but the most annoying symptom is that when I type on a pc key board, I transpose letters! Yes letters, not numbers and I never before had done either of those.

As Dr. G had originally explained, since the thyroid gland controls the output of the hormones that control all of your organs and muscles, besides the typical symptoms one can develop unique symptoms as well. Now that I under a lot less direct stress since the divorce is final and the “problem” person is out of my life, I am optimistic that many of the mental issues and maybe even most of the physical symptoms will subside. I also believe there is the possibility that the Graves’ may go into remission or just go away.

I am a positive person and I feel blessed, though I try to be prepared for life’s bumps in the road, it is impossible, so one must be prepared to adjust and compromise. One thing I have learned for sure is that stress can play havoc on our minds and bodies, therefore it is important to have stress relievers! Thank God for my friends and all our activities, my animals and a serene nature filled place to live! I’m moving on to the next chapter in my life with the anticipation of fun and adventure.

Deb Filly

My Graves' Disease Story- by Carroll Howell



Hi, my name is Betty

I am age 66 at present. Married with two grown sons 6 grandkids. I reside in state of Okla. Married 48 yrs. We are in this together, no matter what.

About 2 years prior, some funny things started happening to my body. At times, they were very scary. A history of thyroid disease is prevalent in my family. Normally, I consider myself somewhat healthy. Only time I saw my regular doctor was once each fall for my well woman check. I always ask if my thyroid was checked during my blood work-up. As always it was.

In 2006 some strange problems arose in my health. My doctor always said just menopausal, menopausal., nothing to worry about. Strange things continued to happen. One Friday morning I felt pretty good, went to work at a private residence. Just real sudden like I began to feel real strange, so I layed down for about 5 minutes. After a few more minutes same thing, so I sat down in a chair. By this time I had heart palpitations. I was sweating heavy, clammy/hot at same time.

Never felt like this before. I knew at that moment I was in real trouble, I felt like I was going to pass out. I did not want to pass out and be there alone. I was beginning to feel real scared. So I called my husband to come get me. I went home took my b/p and it had dropped below 100. I felt like if I layed down and went to sleep, I would not wake up. For about 3 weeks, every time i started to do something, like go to bathroom, or walk to mail box (about 2 car lengths from my front door) I am extremely exhausted. Arms heavy/aching. This last only a few minutes then i feel fine. I was having heart palpitations—shortness of breath. (I said to myself, what is happening here?) I'm having trouble concentrating, but my b/p was normal. Still feeling pretty good. Cannot clean my house now without having to rest every 5 minutes. My digestive system is now all messed up. Very sweaty, clammy-much body heat.

Two months have now passed. Had another bad episode today. This makes 2.

It is now month of may. Still feeling pretty good most days. Watching my emotions so as not to get upset or troubled about anything. Middle of may, real exhausted today. Not feeling myself. (is this what happens as you age?)

It is now august 2007, seems like every place in my body aches, so bad i can barely squeeze out a washcloth. Can't seem to get warm, tightness of chest w/sharp pains. Am having tremors.

It is now end of September, we took a short vacation out of state for few days, felt horrible entire time, so we came home. My chest was really hurting bad by this time. Pain got worse so we went to the hospital and had this checked out. You see these chest pains mimick a heart attach, coming from something else. Took a battery of test including a nuclear stress test. Found nothing.

It is now middle of January-2008- while fixing my hair this a.m. suddenly i had another episode like before. Blood pressure (yes 247)-it appears my b/p is dropping out or skyrocketing for some reason. By the end of January i have had four episodes, each one a little more severe.

June-2008- I'm beginning to lose weight now, real rapid. In two months i lost 29 lbs. I feel like my body is way out there somewhere. My head real muddy.

October 2008- I saw my doctor today. We did blood work. Few days later an appointment was made at hospital for thyroid scans and uptakes. Abnormal blood tests came back for overactive thyroid. Maybe this is why I have been feeling like I have.

Nov—2008. I saw my doctor today. He explained to me Graves' disease- hyperthyroidism. I needed to make some decisions. My body was in real danger, too much hormones being produced. The episodes i had been having was due to thyroid storm you can die from this. Only 1 option was available to me, and that was RAI no other option would be discussed. I was then referred to an endocrinologist.

After a few days my husband and I made the decision to go with RAI. I began to educate myself on this disease. I should have gone to the hospital immediately when I was having these episodes, but I did not know the dangers. I wanted to know all I could learn about this.

I met with the endocrinologist. I had a lot of questions I needed answers to. He was very thorough. He educated me further. He will administer the RAI (in pill form). This pill alone cost $1006.00

Today is December 10-2008. Today is the day. Went to hospital again. Took this supposedly wonderful miracle pill (a one time thing). I am still feeling sick most of the time. Be glad to feel human again. Two days later, throat getting sore, scratchy, and very hoarse.

This lasted about 17 days, could not eat anything hardly. (this did not help the wt problem).

January, 2009- I saw the endocrinologist today. It has now been 3 weeks (a terrible 3 wks) I am so very exhausted, have trouble getting around, husband having to do household chores by now. Dr. Said if you have ever been tired before, you don't know what tired is. I'm sleeping a lot by now. Stomach is so messed up. You see with thyroid problems, a whole lot of your body gets messed up. Your thyroid controls almost every aspect of your functions. Both my regular doctor and the endocrinologist told me several times "what are you going to do, because in 10 years this gland can grow back and you will have to go through this same process again. But guess what, I do not think so.

It is early January, 2009 by now. Dr. Gave me something to control the fatigue. We do not know what happened, but i began to break out in a small rash. Whether it was the RAI or the new meds. Three days now, I am covered in a deep crimson/red/purple covering. Itching like crazy. I look like I have been dipped in can of red paint. Went back to hospital and took X-rays. I had a severe toxic burn from my scalp down to my toes. Only place not affected was center of my face and a patch over my heart. X-rays showed I was burned from the inside out. I could have died then. Two days later I was worse. Saw my regular doctor. He said in all his years of practice he had never seen anything that looked like I did. I was in real pain. Could not wear clothes. Gave me very powerful injection and said to take benedryl to help with the itching. If you have ever had poison ivy or etc. You really don't have a clue what I was experiencing. Dr was calling me at home checking on me. I looked like a giant piece of sand paper. I was burned with this toxic burn so bad, i was peeling like a bad sunburn. I was like this 17 days. I wore large sweat pants and big shirt. Had to take cold showers (that was real fun in middle of winter) the RAI also caused a black fungus inside my mouth.

One conclusion, I will never go through RAI therapy again. I still go do my TSH test every 8 weeks and see my doctor. I have not progressed real well since taking the Synthroid (been taking this since march 10-2009) my Synthroid has been changed 3 times in 6 months. It's hard to establish right dose.

I do not comb my hair much these days, you see my hair is falling out. I can just touch my head and have loose hair. Some days I do not comb my hair at all. I used to have nice hair and nice fingernails. Both my doctors told me several times this graves disease takes a toll on your hair and your fingernails. It is now September 2009, and I have lost about one half my hair volume. I wear a head prosthesis (a wig) on a daily basis. My dr. Says it will be a long time before my hair is normal again.

I am thankful that I did not get thyroid eye disease with this.

The endocrinologist said to me on an earlier visit, he not only told me once, but three times. "whether you realize it or not, but you have had a miracle: my regular doctor said to me recently, "you have been to the other end of the earth and back".

If it had not been for my faith—my church, my husband, my family, and my friends praying for me, I probably would not be sitting here telling you my story today. I still have a long way to go but I am doing better. I have better days now and feeling more like human. I do not want this experience ever again. I owe everything to God, for he still sees me through each day.

What i learned by this horrible experience was, how precious life is. If by going through this graves disease, I may be able to help someone else better understand. There were days I wanted to just give up, didn't care if I lived or not, but there are family and friends that still need me.

Betty h.
Muskogee, ok
Age 66

Lifestyle with or without Graves' Disease. - by Svetla Bankova

Svetla Bankova is 39 years old, and has a 12 year old daughter. She is born in Eastern Europe and now lives between Atlanta, Georgia, USA and Sofia, Bulgaria (and in Argentina sometimes!). She is an author of 5 books: "Life Manual for Graves' Disease and Hyperthyroidism", "Thyroid Eye Disease and Its Healing", "Life Balance Manual for Graves' Disease'", "Ultimate Diet Secrets for Graves' Disease and Hyperthyroidism" and Life Manual for 21st Century Women". She is a former Graves' Disease patient and she cured herself even though the disease is considered "incurable", applying methods and techniques, that are not only natural-but include a deep understanding of the Human Nature and Psychology, as well as a profound psychological approach to our everyday life challenges. Today, she has a blog about Grave's Disease and a Facebook group. Feel free to visit.

So how you manage to keep Graves' Disease away?

We all know that Graves' Disease is just waiting around the corner to sneak back in our lives. I personally constantly keep an eye on what's going on with my body, even 6 years later. It's just like a mark to remind me, that if I am not conscious enough, it may come again. It's not a battle, that you'll forget about, may be until the rest of your life. It's a constantly going war with the surrounding world about who will win first- and your health is the pledge. That's what I have learned in the past 6 years. So, I want to share a few thoughts here:

1. Never, ever think that it's over. Because it's not. Unless you killed your thyroid with RAI, or surgery. Then it's not over again, but due to other reasons.

2. Keep the stress down, no matter what's the price for that.

3. Want less, to have more. To climb more, carry less.

4. Instead of dealing with the consequences, invest in prevention. So said- eat healthy, exercise regularly, laugh a lot and love more.

5. Get enough sleep, since your body recovers from the stresses of the day while you are sleeping.

6. Burn the candle at one end. Lack of sleep, poor diet and no exercise wreaks havoc on our body and mind. Kind of obvious, but worth mentioning as it's often ignored, when we are caught in the every day life. Listen to your mother and don't burn the candle at both ends!

7. Know that you are cared for, loved, esteemed, and valued, even though you may not be told so every day by someone. If you don’t believe in the above, you are in a big trouble- take care of that.

8. They say there's more than one way to skin a cat. The same goes when you start tearing your hair out with all the frustration, grief, anxiety, and yes, stress. It's a state of mental conditioning that is like taking that bitter pill down your throat, causing you to lose your sense of self, and worse your sanity. Just thinking about it can drive anyone off the edge. And they say that the proactive ones are already living off the edge, so be careful.

9. Know your trigger points and hot spots. Presentations, interviews, meetings, giving difficult feedback, tight deadlines, unmanageable kids…. My heart rate is cranking up just writing these down! Figure and work them out, because it’s not worth your health, in a long term run.

10. Be thankful for what you have and who you are. Every day.

I love you.

Svetla

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