

Finding Purpose in a Life of Chronic Illness

By Maryangela DeGrazia-DiTucci

When chronic illness invades your life, your world can become shaken to the core. You see your former life disappear as your new life of chronic illness emerges and becomes your daily reality. In this process, you may become lost. You may question what kind of quality life you could ever have. And you may wonder and search for a new purpose in your life.

I can recall, several years ago, a nurse calling AGMD. She had just lost her job due to her worsening health issues. She spoke through sobs and tears, “my career was my life. I loved working in the medical field and helping others. It’s all I know, and now all that is gone. Now, I have no purpose in life.” As I listened, my heart cried for her as I knew all too well, what it was like, having to leave my own career I was passionate about.

After she spoke for some time, I reassured her that she still had a purpose, but now her purpose had changed. She would still be helping others, but it would be in a different way and to a different audience. She would become a teacher to other patients who were suffering with digestive motility disorders as well as to medical professionals. She became actively involved in AGMD in many capacities and her sense of confidence and purpose grew. Although she suffered greatly with daily symptoms and frequent set-backs, her emotions were still buoyed by knowing she had a purpose in life that would leave a footprint in the lives of others.

I also can remember the turning point in my own life when I was told that I would have an abbreviated life and that I should curtail all activities. Sitting in my rocking chair, listening to the grandfather clock ticking the minutes away, and staring out the window, watching the rest of the world going by, I made the decision that life was too precious to be merely a spectator. Having a purpose in my life was critical to my survival and mental well-being. My purpose became my family and with unrelenting faith, the inception of AGMD.



Perhaps your purpose is to become an advocate for others, or a teacher so others can learn from your experiences. Maybe your purpose is to guide your children into understanding some challenges of illness so they will be compassionate with other people who suffer from all types of disabilities. No matter what talent you have, be it crafts, writing, speaking, poetry, music, art, technical expertise, medical, nutritional, etc., it can be used towards fulfilling a wonderful purpose.

Every patient inherently becomes a teacher. It is our role to educate others, family, friends, strangers and/or the medical communities about what it's like, living with chronic illness. It is our purpose to continue to learn as much as we can about our illnesses and advocate for ourselves and, sometimes, for others. It is our purpose to share our concerns, questions, and experiences so that those who are also suffering will not feel so alone.

The fact that you are here speaks volumes about your importance. Your life can be completely changed by finding your purpose and applying your gifts and talents to the world of chronic illness.

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