



## **Healing Manifesto**

Five years ago I was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease called rheumatoid arthritis. Since then I have been on an amazing healing journey, trying to understand what causes disease and how to get better from it. While I still don't have all the answers I have learned a lot. I'm not the same person I was five years ago, not by a long shot. I've learned a lot about myself on this journey, and I've also come to the belief that there are a lot of inherent problems in the current health care system. I also believe that we all have a role to play in healing, not only ourselves, but the system itself. I believe this to be a grassroots initiative and I believe with all the passion that I can possibly feel that we can Heal the Health Care system.

This is my personal healing manifesto. It is accumulated from what I have learned, and is based on my current set of beliefs. As I learn more, and as I heal more, my beliefs change. This manifesto represents the view of one empowered patient. I believe that we all should have our own healing manifestos, whether we are a patient or a healthcare practitioner, and they may all be different. We all have a role to play in healing ourselves, and by extension, once we have accepted this responsibility we will be playing a part in healing health care.

The first part of this manifesto highlights what I believe to be the challenges with the current system. The second part highlights what each individual can do to take charge of their own health and happiness.

## **Challenges with Current System**

Whether we like it or not, the first thing we need to understand is that every part of the health care system is its own business. Doctors and other health care practitioners are running a business, the pharmaceutical industry is a business, the vitamins and supplements industry is a business, and the food industry is a business. On the other side of this is that every patient is a consumer each time they enter the health care system. This isn't a small point, it is one of the most important things to understand. Each practitioner is running a business and a big part of their focus is to make sure that their business is running effectively. In order to do that, they need to try to market and grow

their business, and the more repeat business they are able to get, the better they will do financially.

### *My experience with the healthcare system*

As part of dealing with my present situation, I have seen several different practitioners and used many types of prescription drugs and supplements. I have also experienced the side effects of prescription drugs. I have been under the care of the following: GP doctor, rheumatologist, naturopath, acupuncturist, osteopath, chiropractor, homeopath, massage therapist, energy healer, reiki practitioner, and herbalist. I have seen many different practitioners and I have been given mixed messages from the healthcare providers. As a patient, it seems like when all they have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail. Each healthcare provider offers a different solution to the diagnosed problem, and they all seem to believe that theirs is the best solution. Some won't even allude to the fact that there are different potential solutions. This is so confusing to the patient, where do you turn? So I started doing some research as part of my only healing journey. As I reached out to people to learn more, I've realized that I'm not alone.

### *Why the healthcare system needs to be healed*

Healthcare spending is escalating at a rate way higher than inflation. My understanding is that in Canada, the government is currently spending over 50% of tax dollars on healthcare, and that is projected to rise substantially over the next few years. Yet with all the money being spent there is an increased incidence of illness and disease. While there have been great steps taken to treat the symptoms of illness and disease, the efforts made in prevention have been sorely lacking. With all the money being spent on healthcare you'd think we'd be getting better. But we're not, we're sicker than ever. Something has to change.

### *“Western” medical system*

In the current western system, there is a tendency to go see a doctor whenever a symptom presents itself. We go to our doctor looking for answers, because we assume that the doctor has all the answers, and we all think we can get answers right away. Doctors are encouraged to see many patients in a day (make that “paid by how many patients they see in a day”) and as a result they don't have very much time with each patient. There's a prescription drug for everything. We act like our bodies are machines. We add a bit of oil here and there, and off we go again. We treat every symptom like a fire hydrant to put out a spark. We rarely even try to determine root causes, we only focus on treating symptoms.

### **The Solution?**

I think it will only take a subtle shift in thinking, and I think it is a grass roots initiative beginning with empowered patients and healthcare practitioners that realize there simply

has to be a better way. It's all about awareness. We have to stop simply treating symptoms, and start looking for answers to what's causing the condition in the first place. If we don't start treating root causes, then the symptoms will come back, or show up in other ways. Each of us can make a difference, and it all starts when we empower ourselves to realize that we are not part of the problem, we are part of the solution.

In other words, I believe it's all about becoming educated consumers, understanding the role that we play in contributing to our own health and wellness. Here's my list of things that everyone can do to manage their health and wellness.

- 1. Understand that you are the Captain and Commander of your personal health care team.** There are many ways to deal with conditions. It is up to you to be your own best advocate. Doctors know a lot about the human body, but you know the most about your body. You know what you've been eating, and you know what's been eating you. You can check out alternatives to see which will work best for you. If something doesn't feel right about a practitioner's recommendation, don't be afraid to speak up and ask more questions. **Determine what works for YOU.** I believe this has to be your number one goal. There are so many conflicting stories being shared, and this leads to great confusion. Become an educated "consumer" and "buy the best products for you". My biggest belief is that if you believe that your choice is a good one, then it is. Regardless of what anyone else tries to tell you. That doesn't mean you won't learn something new later and adjust those choices, it just means that it is important to "be at peace" with your choices.
- 2. REMEMBER that the body is designed with an innate ability to heal itself.** We know that from our childhood days when we would heal from cuts and bruises, colds and flus. We know it has this ability, we don't need to understand it any better than that, we simply need to accept it. The body is meant to heal, our job is to give it the best working environment in order to do so.
- 3. Learn to understand how your body is communicating with you.** Symptoms are the body's way of communicating that something is out of balance. If you're under a lot of stress and get a headache, the headache is the symptom but the root cause is the stress. Think of the headache as a whisper. If you deal with the root cause effectively, in time the body can bring itself back into balance. If you don't deal with the whisper, then eventually it will turn into a scream. That could be represented by a more serious illness. There are many ways to learn how the body communicates. Regular journaling, meditation, and automatic writing (sitting quietly, ask yourself a question, then write whatever comes to mind until there's no more to write) are all ways to slow down and take time to look inside to see what's eating you, if you don't already know.
- 4. Dealing and healing. Stop looking for the "quick fix" whenever symptoms arise.** When a condition arises, you may be in such a state that you just need to "deal" with the current situation. That may mean reaching for a prescription drug that will help at

the present moment. However, that's not the end of the story. Now that you've dealt with the immediate need, take the time to look at potential contributors to the condition. It's a good time to start "healing". If you don't deal with the root cause, then the symptom will likely return after the drug has worn off, or it may show up again as a different symptom. There are also side effects to many drugs that should be understood. You may think the condition has arisen overnight, but in most cases it has been building for a while. Once you have the understanding of what the root cause might be, have the courage to deal with it .... before it becomes a scream. It may take a bit of time to heal, now is a good time to start. Give the body a bit of time to work its magic.

- 5. Understand what's fueling your body.** "Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food" ~ Hippocrates. This topic is huge and there are many conflicting beliefs. As much as I have a passion for "healing health care", there is an entire movement of people looking to "heal the food supply". I think the most important point is to take the time to understand more about the food you eat and then make the best decisions for you. Several people have reported healing themselves from various conditions (that were described as unhealable) simply by changing their diets. Many of these have switched to diets that have a much higher focus on vegetables and eating of whole foods. It is also important to understand that many food manufacturers are operating more in the interest of shareholders than they are in the interest of the consumer. The processed food industry is much more about marketing than we realize. They market their foods as healthy alternatives using words like "no fat", "no sugar", "less salt", etc. But many of the products that have less fat are higher in sugar. Other products have fruit names in their title (e.g. a cereal with the word blueberry or pomegranate in the name), but the label only shows flavors or extracts of the fruit. There is little nutritional value in these foods and these are the foods that are contributing to obesity, and I believe they are contributing to disease as well. The best recommendation I've heard is to "shop the outside of the supermarket". That's where the fruits and vegetables, meat and dairy are found. But don't take my word for it, do some research for yourself.
- 6. Educate yourself on what contributes to illness.** It's not just what you're eating, it's what's eating you. There is more and more evidence being presented daily that shows that stress and other challenges that we face in our life are actually contributing factors to illness and disease. If you think "your relationship is killing you" or "your job is sucking the life out of you", you just might be right. Once you figure this out and deal with it, you're well on your way to true healing.
- 7. Understand your response to the placebo effect.** Most people have heard of the *placebo effect* where controlled studies have shown that many people heal from conditions even if they are not treated with the drug they may think they're being treated with. For some reason, the idea that they think they're going to get better contributes to their healing. Studies have shown that the placebo effect is a contributor to between 18 and 80% of healing. Many cases of spontaneous remission

are preceded by the patient, after getting a disease diagnosis and prognosis, adamantly claiming that “I don’t see it that way”. A prognosis is simply a belief that is given by past results. It’s not always right, and it may not apply to you. In most cases, the beliefs that you choose at the time of diagnosis will have an impact on your healing. Your outlook really does matter.

- 8. Understand your response to the nocebo effect.** Fewer people have learned about the *nocebo effect*. In similar studies, patients are told of the possible side effects of treatments, and some of the patients that are given a placebo experience the negative side effects. If you hear over and over that “1 in 9 women have breast cancer”, “your grandmother had breast cancer, your mother had breast cancer, you’re likely to get breast cancer”, it is natural to start “worrying” that you may get cancer. And yet the simple act of “worrying” is a form of stress that is a contributor to illness, including cancer. If a healthcare practitioner tells you that your condition cannot be cured, you may choose to believe that, or you may do further research to understand that other people have healed from the same or similar condition. You get to choose your belief, and you get to decide how to proceed. Mother Teresa is quoted as saying she would never attend an anti-war protest, but she would attend every peace rally.
- 9. Understand available alternatives.** While the system can be confusing, there are lots of ways to understand alternatives available to you. If you get a broken bone, you are almost surely going to end up at the hospital being treated by a bone specialist. Most cases aren’t that cut and dried. If you throw out your back, you might reach for prescription drugs or you might see a chiropractor. Energy healing is a type of treatment that is becoming more and more prevalent. There are so many different types of practitioners and each has had success treating various conditions. Different people respond to different types of treatment. Ask questions. Do research. Take the time to find out more about treatment options, then figure out which one makes the most sense for you.
- 10. Understand side effects.** There are side effects to virtually any treatment. Whether it’s a prescription drug, a vitamin or a supplement, it is being processed by the body and there is a potential for side effects. In some cases, the side effects can be worse than the condition itself. In other cases, the symptoms may be so severe that you have to deal with them regardless of the side effects. Once the potential side effects are understood, you can make an informed decision on how to treat your current condition.
- 11. Establish your own goals.** When some of the options available to you are covered by your health care system or benefits plan whereas others are not, the natural temptation (and in some cases the only option) is to go for the cheapest treatment. In some cases, this may prove to be short term thinking. If the goal is to heal over the long term, the cheapest solution may be to seek care that is not covered. For example, a good chiropractor can often resolve a back issue in only one or a very few sessions by manipulating the body and helping it get back to its “normal state”. The same

situation could be treated with a prescription drug that has side effects over the longer term. Paying for the chiropractor might be the best solution for you, depending on your beliefs and confidence in dealing with chiropractors.

- 12. Slow down.** In today's fast-paced world that we have created, people are often trying to operate at maximum efficiency for hours on end. There's always something else that needs to be completed, another urgent situation to deal with. This puts the body on high alert, into "fight or flight" mode. All of the body's energy is spent trying to fuel the current rush. The body knows how to handle this, but it also needs time to recover and go back to its "regularly scheduled duties". Slow down. Pause. Take a few deep breaths. Meditate. The irony is that when you do so, your mind tends to clear out the clutter and you can approach things in a much more efficient way.
- 13. Take care of the "obvious", sleep and exercise.** Regular sleep is a huge contributor to good health, as is daily exercise. Remember this and simply "do your best". There's no better day than today to re-commit to being regular in these routines.
- 14. Emote.** It has been well-written that all emotions are based on either love or fear, and most self-help practitioners and others encourage you to choose the emotion that is based on love. Happiness versus sadness. Good versus bad. This sounds good in principle, but emotions are real and they need to be expressed. Let your emotions happen. It is okay to feel anger, hurt, sadness, etc. Suppressed emotions build up over time and add stress to the body. Feeling your emotions is all part of being authentic. If you are feeling anger and are unable to express it in any way, you are not being authentic to yourself, and you're only hurting yourself. You don't have to swear or break a plate. Simply speaking the words "my first emotion is anger, and here's why" is a great start. You will be able to recover from whatever comes next, and your body will thank you for "letting it go". Now that you've let it go, it is much easier to bring yourself back to choosing the love based emotion.
- 15. Get involved.** Loneliness is an emotion that is very hard on people. Find a community activity, or several, to get involved with like-minded people. Join an online community, and do something with others that you just love to do.
- 16. Passion and Play.** Doing things that are fun are very "healing". Find time to play, do something that you love that has absolutely no attachment to an outcome. Following a passion, even if only for a few minutes a day allows the creative juices to flow. When doing activities of this nature you'll find that "nothing else matters". At this time you are truly "in the present moment". There is no yesterday, there is no tomorrow, there is only "now". This is when the body is most at peace and does its best healing.
- 17. Stop thinking about your health.** Now that you've taken the time to learn more and understand what contributes to good health, the best treatment of all is to stop thinking about it. It is almost impossible to think about your health without worrying about what would happen if you lost it. There are so many better things to think

about. Love your family and friends. Hug a tree. Watch the birds. Examine the night sky. Take a walk. Play your guitar. Enjoy your life.

## Healing Health Care

So how does this manifesto help Heal HealthCare? The biggest problem with the current health care system is that there are too many people in it, and once you're in it, it's hard to get out of it. It's not somewhere that you want to be. You want it to be there for you when you need it, but you'd rather that you never needed it. Each of the activities described in this manifesto are either preventative, or they deal with the root cause of symptoms while they're a whisper. The same approaches apply as the whispers become a scream, and they're all designed to help you get back out of the system.

My belief is that as we put more and more of these simple techniques and beliefs to work, and share them with others, then we will see a day in the not too distant future when illness and disease are no longer as prevalent. There are already many stories of people healing from diseases that seemed incurable, and there will be many more. There will be less people in the system, and the side effect will be that the health care system heals itself. Sound familiar?

As individuals, it is a tall order for us to tackle Big Pharma, Big Food, Big Government. But we can all do our part to heal ourselves first, and help to heal others. We are all in this together, we are all connected.

*So how can people find out more and help with your vision of healing health care?*

The truth is that I don't have all the answers, but I do have a lot of questions. And I know there has to be a better way. I've said for a long time that it will take a community to make a difference. Working with my colleague and friend Dr. Lissa Rankin, I am the Community Manager for an online community called [Heal Health Care Now](#), with a tagline of "Putting the Care Back in Health Care". In that community, empowered patients and health care practitioners are coming together to share stories and resources, and creating Calls to Action to inspire others to get involved and make a difference.