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SPECIAL ISSUE
A HOH'S THOUGHTS
2020

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HLAA HOUSTON
SPECIAL FEATURE

THIS ISSUE

The Six Stages Of Healing
Helpful Resources

"HOH" Hard Of Hearing Person

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THE SIX STAGES OF HEALING

Yogic Tools for Chronic and Critical Illness By Guratama K. Khalsa

When a chronic or critical illness strikes, the effects on a person's life are not just physical, but emotional, mental, spiritual and energetic, as well. Chronic and critical illnesses bring profound challenges into a person's world.

However, they also offer the opportunity for deep, personal transformation. Guratama K. Khalsa has spent much of her life personally dealing with chronic and critical illness.

This program distills her experience into the Six Stages of Healing which addresses some of the challenges and changes people with chronic and critical illness have to face along the path of their healing journey.

Each Stage embodies a guiding wisdom and positive affirmation to help face a particular aspect of the journey through chronic and critical illness. Not everyone will experience all of these Stages, nor walk them in a particular order, but each one offers hard-won pearls of wisdom from Guratama's own personal story.

With each Stage, Guratama offers realistic advice, practical resources and yogic tools to help you develop the skills to manage and cope with the issues at hand. These resources and tools will help guide and support the journey of your body, mind and soul through chronic and critical illness.

Stage One: Am I Really Sick?

Prior to being diagnosed with a chronic or critical illness, something may not feel right in your body and your whole life becomes affected by this. Even though you sense it strongly, it may not be obvious to those around you.

- All I know is what I feel.

Learning to listen to yourself and trust what you hear when you listen is essential. Your body is sending you messages that you need to listen to and respect.

- All the people in my life evaluate and understand the circumstances I am challenged by from their own point of view.

It can become very challenging for the people around you to adjust and adapt to what is happening to you, and to what is happening to them because of your condition. The challenge is how to handle the doubts, questions and reactions of your family, friends and sometimes even your doctors. There is a way to separate your experience from their experience, to respect what is inside you, while realizing that there is a limit to what those you come in contact with can understand.

- Is there a medical diagnosis that matches what I am experiencing?

Now, you're looking for facts and answers to your questions. You will be engaging with the medical establishment to determine if you do have a medically recognized disease. Along with going the route of mainstream medicine, you may find yourself investigating alternative medicine like acupuncture and applied kinesiology.

There is also the possibility of being repeatedly misdiagnosed before finding a diagnosis that matches what your symptoms are telling you. In some cases, you may not even find a diagnosis.



Stage Two: Diagnosis

- My life is drastically changing.

When you find a diagnosis that matches what your symptoms are saying, it's a wake-up call. The diagnosis may be sudden and unexpected, or it may be an answer to a long-standing problem. Either way, your life is dramatically shifting. There can be tremendous shock and feelings of vulnerability because it seems like everything around you is falling apart. Your life has been seriously disrupted and now the goal is to treat the shock and get help with handling all the normal reactions that come up, so you can regroup and move forward. Suffering and not finding a diagnosis can be just as upsetting.

- I am not my diagnosis and the choices I make in the moment are the only things I can control.

When diagnosed with a chronic or critical illness, the only thing you can control are your own choices. It is important to empower yourself with as much information as possible so that you can decide the best way to proceed. It is also important to find and develop relationships with doctors who are willing to listen to all your concerns and allow you to have a say in your care.

- I learn to research, get in the door and move through the networks of my country's medical systems.
- I learn to incorporate alternative medicine and pain management techniques.
- The condition I am challenged by offers me an opportunity to evaluate the journey of my soul.

When faced with a chronic or critical illness, it is normal for the mind to evaluate your entire life. Automatically, the subconscious combs through all of your memories looking for the answers to these questions: What Happened? How did I end up here like this? What did I do wrong? At this part of your journey, you have the opportunity to tap into so many powerful yogic tools to help you handle this whole process. You may discover new things about yourself, your past, your habits, your relationships and your beliefs.

Stage Three: Living With Chronic and Critical Illness

- I pay attention to my Self and give myself credit for facing this heavy challenge.

Self-acceptance, self-care, self-nurturing, putting yourself first: these guiding principles become necessary for your survival. You may change the way you eat. You may have to develop new routines. You may integrate certain supplements, herbs or alternative medicine into your life. It is also important to stop and feel every little victory you have, and to honor your “story”. Taking care of yourself and giving yourself credit for what you are going through becomes the highest thing you can do for yourself.

- I manage the discipline of taking prescription drugs.

In many cases of chronic and critical illness, there are drugs given to the patient with intense side effects. The drugs are necessary tools with powerful benefits and potential dangers. You can learn to appreciate your drugs for their positive benefits, while separating the negative side effects from your sense of self. “It’s not me. It’s the drugs.”

- I receive the support of caregivers and tap into support groups and organizations that can help me.

When a person is healthy, it is easy to think, “I can do everything on my own.” But when facing a chronic or critical illness, survival often depends on accepting the help of others while maintaining good boundaries and healthy relationship dynamics with those who step up to support you.

- I acknowledge that the relationships in my life are shifting.

Chronic and critical illness not only brings about deep changes within, but also changes in relationships. Friendships may shift. Family members may not be able to handle what you are going through. New people come into your life who become part of your journey. Others may leave. Allow yourself to be open to change and know that you can adjust your attitude and incorporate helpful tools to handle these shifts.

- Awareness of my Spirit and soul keeps growing.

In these first three stages, your entire life has gone through a dramatic and possibly rapid change. Your body is going through unexpected and painful changes and it may feel like your body is betraying you.

Your mind is evaluating everything, trying to understand “Why me?” “What happened?” The structure of your life transforms. While adjusting to these changes and developing new skills to ride the waves, it is important to pause and remember your breath. Take time to stop, reflect and integrate whatever insights and wisdom the journey has brought to your awareness.

Stage Four: Episodes of Intense Sickness

Like a real bad storm, chronic and critical illness can include intense and potentially dangerous phases. Sometimes intense sickness does not come for a while; sometimes, it happens right away. Stages Four and Five deal with the depth of the storm.

- The suffering is true.

You may experience loss with your physical body. For instance, you may lose one or more of your five senses. A gland, a major body organ or even an entire system of the body may stop functioning. There will be a loss of freedom. You may have to deal with new and unbearable symptoms or side effects from the drugs. It seems like the pace will never let up and the pressure can feel unbearable. The key to surviving these traumas is to acknowledge that you are suffering. Then, you have choices about what to do with the conditions that suffering brings to your awareness.

- Quality of Life issues are my top priority.

Listening to your body and intuition are essential to having quality in your life, even in the midst of sickness. Whatever input you receive from others, remember that your choices are ultimately up to you. Do a reality check and identify what you **can** handle and what you **can** do. Ideally, everyone in your life, including your doctors and loved ones, will support your choices.

- I can find one thing to be grateful for today.

Even in the depth of the storm, there is the possibility to choose not to suffer and to find something to be grateful for. When a person can notice something positive in the darkest moments of life, that is the greatest victory of human consciousness. You can create that victory and enjoyment for yourself.

Gratitude journal 



Stage Five: Facing Death

When faced with chronic and critical illness, you may start thinking about death and dying. The truth is, we are all going to leave this body behind, and that can happen at any moment. No one knows when they will take their last breath, but when grappling with a serious illness, you have the opportunity to look death in the face and prepare for it.

- My fear of death is normal and it is what I need to face now.

The thought of death can be very frightening for some people. When you think about death, it makes you look at your life and ask, "Did I do what I came here to do?" Facing the fear of death gives you a chance to evaluate and make peace with the choices you made in your life. Take this opportunity to investigate the process of death. Doing this will lessen your fear and help you relax.

- I work to release my attachments and my hopes for the future.

Everything is energy. Herein, you have the opportunity to devote your strength to the natural process in dying of letting go of those you love and your plans for the future. Death is the process of the body shutting down and the mind detaching from the reality it currently perceives. As you surrender your hold on life, the indefatigable Spirit within rises up to carry the soul on its final journey.

- I get my personal and legal affairs in order, asking for help if I need it.

When dealing with death, there are many important legal issues to be addressed such as creating a Medical Directive or a Do-Not-Resuscitate (DNR) Order, and making sure your Last Will and Testament is in order. You make clear the instructions you wish to be followed if you become incapacitated or for when you die.

- I create an altar in honor of my death and refer to it for inspiration.

For many people, thoughts about death are intimately linked with their spiritual beliefs. It can be very healing to create a visual, tangible representation of what you believe the spiritual journey through death and beyond means to you. Acceptance and forgiveness are important elements of your work with your altar, and here also you have the opportunity to offer up your fears and concerns, your intentions and prayers.

No matter how much pain or suffering is involved in your illness and until the breath is gone, every day of your life is full of opportunity coming to you one precious breath at a time, connecting you to infinite potential and possibility of how to spend that moment. The gesture of creating and maintaining your altar helps inspire you to live your breaths consciously and in gratitude.

Stage Six: Re-Entry

For some people, the process of facing death leads to the end of their journey in this life. For others, the intense storm passes. The medications, therapies, self-care, intention and prayer have brought you to the other side. Now there is the opportunity to build a new life.

- **I accept that my life is permanently changed by the course of this illness.**

Coming through the storm, there is an evaluation process. How has my body been permanently altered by the illness? Are there drugs I will need to take for the rest of my life? There may be grief and post-traumatic stress (PTS) issues to deal with. There is an exhaustion factor. There may be feelings of loneliness and a struggle to reconnect with everyday life. There are self-identity issues.

As you re-enter life, assess the damage and identify what it is you need to learn to live with and what you can work on and heal. "The process of self-healing is the privilege of every human being."

- **I create and commit to a daily health routine that works for me.**

Now you can move out of emergency mode into a gentle and realistic maintenance routine. There is a sense of empowerment because you have survived. You have faced death and now a new world is opening up for you. You can rebuild and regain your vitality, taking your self-care to a new level. Self-healing is not a miracle. It is a set of agreements that you make with yourself. You find and experiment with new activities that allow you to integrate into the community. Try out some of the many tools available to help rejuvenate yourself!

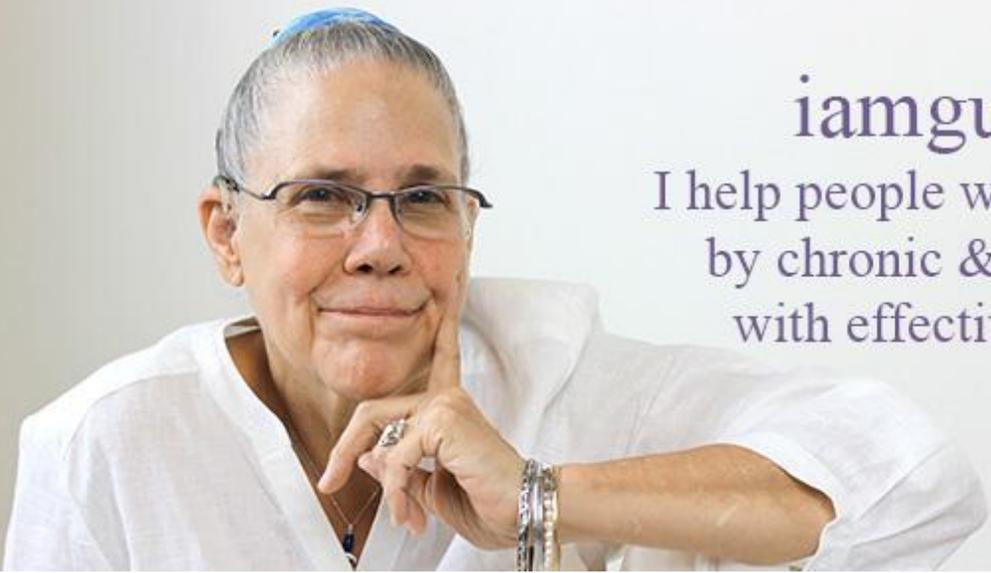
- **I allow myself to continue to heal and transform at the soul level.**

To have come this far, you have most likely experienced the deep guidance and support of your inner-most being, your soul. You are redefining your life from the soul level, engaging the emotional and spiritual issues that have come to the surface during the illness. You develop new skills to integrate the mind, body and spirit into one healthy, co-creative identity. You refine your relationship with your Spirit as you feel and understand it. And there is a victory to celebrate!

- **I feel better. I am better. And that is my base.**

You have been working on yourself physically, mentally and spiritually and by now, you have defined what an authentically healthy life is for you.

Your experience has brought about a new understanding of the responsibility you have to take really good care of yourself. You've learned to balance the recommendations of good doctors with trust in your own intuition - this sense of inner balance is your new definition of health. And, you are committed to a personal program that keeps your life in that balance. Even in the midst of great challenge, well-being and peace are possible. You feel closer to and better about your Self, therefore you ARE better.



iamguruatma

I help people who are challenged
by chronic & critical illness
with effective *Yogic Tools*

 iamguruatama

 yogictools  YouTube

About The Author

Guruatma K. Khalsa was born in 1952 and grew up in a large, middle-class family in Chicago, Illinois. Being the oldest girl of nine children, she was always taking care of others, working both in and outside the home and struggling, just like her father, with severe allergies. In her freshman year in college, after months of battling with what doctors misdiagnosed as a sinus infection, she experienced the first flare-up of a rare and degenerative autoimmune disease characterized by acute inflammation and deterioration of the cartilaginous tissue throughout the body. One morning, she woke to a shockingsight in the mirror - the bridge of her nose was gone! An underlying disease process had slowly disintegrated the cartilage. For the next 24 years, myriads of doctors were not able to recognize and identify that hidden disease as it went in and out of remission and attacked different parts of her body.

Guruatma left college but continued working and eventually she had two reconstructive surgeries on her nose.

In 1978 during a severe relapse, she desperately sought help at a 3HO-Kundalini Yoga Center. Here at last she found relief! Discovering something that gave such immediate and positive results, she threw herself, body, mind and soul into that lifestyle while also learning about and trying alternative medicines. Her efforts paid off and the disease went into remission for about 17 years. But life is full of twists and turns and in 1986 she was hit by lightning and experienced the first of several encounters with death.

The disease returned with a vengeance in yet another tragic episode, this time inflaming the cartilage in her rib cage during a period when she physically over-exerted herself doing deep-tissue massage. Doctors at M.D. Anderson suspected she might have cancer; they put her on morphine while they investigated for three months but found nothing. Once again, using alternative medicine, Guruatma weaned herself off the morphine and pushed the disease into remission.

Years later, during a time of great personal stress, the disease surfaced again, exploding like a bomb and attacking several places within her body and including serious eye complications. In February of 1995, Guruatma fell into the county hospital system. It was there that the disease was finally identified as Relapsing Polychondritis; she was given a 5-year prognosis and told to get her affairs in order. Doctors started her on chemotherapy, high-dosage prednisone, pain medications, and a host of other prescription drugs with devastating side effects. Guruatma lost her hearing in both ears during the course of chemotherapy. As if being profoundly deaf weren't challenging enough, for three whole years the Audiology Department determined she was not eligible for hearing aids!

Ever so slowly, using both alternative and mainstream medicine, and with countless set-backs along the way, she was able to incrementally wean herself off all prescription medication, including the 5 drugs she was told she would be on for the rest of her life. She fought a long, hard battle and the disease began to loosen its death-grip on her. By 2006, she was back on track doing yoga in a chair with modifications. Guruatma's Chair Yoga Class was born of this era. Using the yogic tools that she now shares with others, she gradually lost 100 lbs. and learned how to take care of her Self in order to live a healthy and happy life.

In 2008, Guruatma began teaching a daily 6 a.m. Kundalini Yoga class at Yoga Central in Houston, Texas where she lives with her husband. In March, she began her public speaking career, accepting an invitation to participate in a TV panel discussion on Hearing Loss. As her world opened up, she was asked to teach a 'Chair Yoga Class for Seniors and for people with a Disability' at the City of Houston MMSC Adaptive Sports and Recreation Center where she had been assisted throughout her own recuperative process from 1999 - 2007. That class is well attended and now in its 8th year!

In 2009, Guruatma started working with individual clients challenged by chronic and critical illness, while organizing her expertise and information into easily accessible materials, and in 2011, she officially opened her business, 'Yogic Tools' and its accompanying website. Visited by hundreds of people around the world on a daily basis, yogic-tools.com offers helpful, inspiring information and practical tools.

Guruatma has walked through the long, dark night of the soul. Although she had support coming in from many directions, she knows how it feels to suffer through the intense loneliness that can accompany a chronic or critical illness. She has lived through years of inexplicable pain and suffering, dozens of misdiagnoses, prescription drug nightmares, fighting tooth-and-nail to keep from falling through cracks in the medical system and, dealing with feelings of abandonment, hopelessness and wanting to die.

For all those challenged by chronic and critical illness, Guruatma stands out as a victor and a light in the darkness, showing the way to make it through, giving step-by-step instructions, support and encouragement.

More from Guruatma

Stop & Feel it: One Woman's Extraordinary Path of Healing

A practical approach to living with a chronic or critical illness that includes a unique spiritual dimension. In this engaging and informative guide, Guruatma tells her story of dealing with a life-long autoimmune disorder and offers simple, down-to-earth advice based on what she learned along the way. Her story is compelling and her advice is generic so that anyone can use it and benefit. This book is suitable for caregivers as well as those suffering from any form of chronic or critical illness. Having been to the brink of death and despair more than once, Guruatma slowly made her way back to remission and now enjoys good health. Today, she lives an active and meaningful life as a personal coach and yoga teacher for people with debilitating illnesses. She teaches what she knows from first-hand experience and many people have found that working with Guruatma opened a door to healing that otherwise they might have missed. Previously published as "Stop and Feel It: Walking the Path of Healing with Guruatma" by Guruatma K. Khalsa.

This book is for you

- If you are suffering from a chronic or critical illness such as any of the various autoimmune disorders.
- If you are the caregiver of someone who is suffering.
- If a friend or someone in your family is chronically or critically ill.
- If you or someone you know is very sick and approaching death.
- If you are a healthcare professional.

You should read this book if you are

- On your own path of healing.
- Looking for suggestions that encompass the whole person, body, mind, and spirit or soul.

Amazon Link: tinyurl.com/stopandfeelit





HELPFUL RESOURCES

HLAA NATIONAL

Who We Are

Founded in 1979 by Howard E. "Rocky" Stone, the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) is the nation's leading organization representing consumers with hearing loss. The programs and events we offer are designed to focus on you—the person.

HLAA strives to give people the tools they need to live more successfully with hearing loss and to show them they do not have to face hearing loss alone.

Our Mission

The mission of HLAA is to open the world of communication to people with hearing loss by providing information, education, support and advocacy.



FOR MORE INFO VISIT HEARINGLOSS.ORG

EQUIPMENT DONATIONS

DONATE YOUR HAND-ME-DOWN HEARING EQUIPMENT!

If you have any hearing aid products that have been gently used or needs repairs, PLEASE donate them so they can be given to another hard of hearing person in need. Your generosity will change a life.

We are a non-profit group that helps our community through your generosity.

DONATE AT OUR MEETINGS!

Just bring your items and we'll take them off your hands. We'll find them a new home.

Anything helps your community.



WALK4 HEARING

Hearing Loss Association of America

15

YEARS 2006 - 2020

1ST VIRTUAL CELEBRATION

VIA ZOOM

Saturday, Nov. 7, 2020
Sign on begins, 8:45 a.m.
Program starts, 9:00 a.m.

Details to join the celebration will be provided when you RSVP

-RSVP LINK-
<https://tinyurl.com/W4HHOU>



