

**“You’ve Got To
Laugh
Your Way Out!”**

**Chantelle Hart
(With Lionel Hartley)**

“You’ve Got To Laugh Your Way Out!”

By Chantelle Hart with Lionel Hartley

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To the Lord for inspiring me and giving me His gift.

-Chantelle Hart

Introduction

I was sick for most of my life until a turn around came in my “thirties” and a new health was supplied. In my “twenties” I lived a life of constant drug taking and at times tried heavy drugs. Hospitals and sickness really took strong hold during the time I was experiencing an abusive relationship, straying from the Lord’s path and denying his truthful guidelines for healthy living. I continued to pray and sing gospel songs during these years, a comfort and support which kept me close to God, even as my life was being shattered. I choose to go to God because I found there was a way in which to be delivered from guilt, suffering, and shame. The Father of Heaven proved to be compassionate, long-suffering, loving and comforting. He did not forsake me, He gave me courage to face my fears. He of all was the best counsellor, and proved Himself worthy to be praised. He alone can help us to change the tide.

Knowing God has been gracious to me, I give him thanks!

Jesus Please Tell Me Why?

Jesus please tell me why,
My soul and body are tortured so.
My love and Devotion you already know.
I want to fly like a bird on the wing-
Please answer me when I knock,
Only you can make my heart sing.
For nearly 40 years I have been
Trapped in this living hell!

Please tell me why
You never let the enemy leave me alone.
Unlike Job
You never stripped me of all that I love,
Instead you sent an olive branch
On the wings of a Dove.
Drugs and more drugs is all I know,
Please hold my hand and never let it go!

- Judith Read (Used with permission)

Tender Loving Care

I have this burden to write for people in what are called “Mental Institutions” Although I have a very busy schedule, I have asked God to create the opportunity for me to encourage these people. I am overwhelmed by the enormity of the task involved in helping to give a voice to these neglected peoples. Often they are left in Doctors’ care, and often go through painful treatment with apparently no-one caring or understanding. I did not personally go through as much as others I know have, yet what I went through was difficult enough. A couple of years ago I was talking to a Pastor and he made a comment that impressed me to write for and about these people. This is not an easy task, because sharing personal experiences is never very easy. Especially if you are a private person.

No-one would like to be criticised for their past, however I feel comfortable writing this book only because I believe it is healthy to face fears. I have also been encouraged by many who have read drafts of this book before publication.

Does a mother expecting a child know the pain until she experiences it? Does some-one understand a heart-attack until they feel it? People in Mental Institutions know this story, even if others find it difficult to comprehend. There may be insights here for those that choose to have an open mind.

There are many that would like to understand more, even professionals in this field. Those that study and treat mental disorders are becoming more familiar with patient needs and yet not many patients are in a hurry for treatments they don't understand. Most fear the thought of it and I was no different. When other people find out you are receiving treatment they stay clear. From what we don't understand, we tend to distance ourselves — it's only natural.

A variety of mental illnesses are unexplainable and even the doctors would agree. My heart goes out to people with a diagnosis of mental illness simply because then they are regarded as out-casts. It seems that even the professionals in this area have not fully understood the patients. The family and friends trust the Doctors and rely on their recommendations assuming that they understand. Even the person that is being admitted trusts the judgement of these quali-

fied doctors. It is perfectly natural to trust them since it is their task to help, yet it appears that there is often a lack of compassion. This is something which needs to change.

Please don't jump to the conclusion that I am suggesting that these doctors don't do their best, because I'm sure they do and its not a easy job. But neither is it ever easy to be placed it a hospital for treatment. If a Doctor that once treated these people was placed in there for treatment at some stage in his life, I wonder what the result would be? Would it really be any different? I suppose it may be more difficult and hard on them since they are aware of what the treatments involve. It could possibly devastate that doctor's life. If doctors could be required to receive some of their own medicine, they would then have more understanding and compassion for the needs of their patients.

For some doctors it is nothing more than a task, and a well paid one at that. But are the patients' needs really being meet? Personally, I know that mine were not — my only cry was for comfort which I only found in some-one from above: my God. The majority of inmates that I met over the years were nice

people. They were not only friends but became like a family to me. We shared many thoughts and things. If some-one had run out of cigarettes we'd supply each other until we arranged to get our own. It was our way of sharing and caring. It may have been the loan of some money until the banks were opened or until our family or friends bought some in. It was always returned, so it was no problem to share. At mealtimes, tables were shared, unless they demonstrated a preference to sit alone. We also shared through plenty of talking and watching television together.

I can remember a Brisbane Hospital I was place in. When I had been in there for a little while I discovered that it was just a large lock-up. Some of them were wandering around and, being the friendly sort, I would go and introduce myself. There was an area where music was playing where there were plenty of seats taken by patients and they looked so lifeless. Never before had I been in a hospital where so many were in lock-up. Despair, sadness and very empty looking lives were in full view.

Something needed to be done. I went over and turned up the music and asked, "Who wants to dance?" I

guess it worked, for at least smiles appeared on their faces!

Dancing then became the fun part of their day and most joined in, and the few who didn't started to laugh. Who wouldn't laugh at seeing our pyjamas swaying? Thinking back, I wonder if we disturbed the nurses? It was all quiet and peaceful before the music was turned up. There were no complaints and we enjoyed ourselves — exercising, laughing and dancing with one another. It seemed better than just sitting around looking depressed. It was good to keep yourself busy in there if you could find things to do, and there was plenty to do when the staff would allow you to help. I liked helping others where I could and it was important to me to be able to. One particular time I was informed the beds had not been made with clean sheets for a while so I received permission from the nurse to do beds. It helped them and at the same time made it more comfortable for the patients. It was extremely good for me to be able to do these sort of chores. However the nurse did comment that I was suppose to be in there for a rest. Although that was right, I really felt more comfortable caring for others. Once it was done I was able to rest.

There are many books about these places — plenty of books on the diseases themselves which do little more than tell families they are unable to take their loved ones home. But not one book telling us how to encourage or strengthen these patients in this the deepest moment of their lives.

The only place I found real comfort was in the Bible, a book which has been largely disregarded. There used to be copies around when I was visiting these hospitals, but not now, sadly. Bibles were allowed only if your family would bring them in at your request. My mother and children used to understand my need for the Bible as they knew me well enough to see that during hard times this book made me happy. As I needed a friend, comfort and hope was available from these precious pages. Sure, flowers make a nice setting in a dull room, and visitors make nice company for a while, but who's there when your loved ones go? My Bible brightened my life more than anything else which was offered to me. As nice as it was to have loved ones come and go, and I looked forward to those times, yet I needed some-one constant and understanding that could see me through this difficult time.

I was never ashamed to admit it to other patients, doctors, or nurses. Although some don't think so, which is sad, there is hope for these people! The Bible gives hope in contrast to the negative comments you are likely to hear from the medical profession. It does not lift up the spirit when something is said to dishearten you or make you feel that way. Believing in some-one upstairs always revived my hope — even if I felt crushed by what I was daily told, God lifted me up. Again doctors thought I was totally weird. It seemed very odd to them that Christianity could work in this fashion. But the doctor's ignorance could not prevent me from believing that God was with me and that He made it possible for me to cope. Many of these doctors do not believe and that is their choice.

Even though no-one can force the doctors to believe, it is their disbelief that prevents some from recovering. Its the conviction of individual hearts one way or another.

Friends

There are friends that are sincere,
There are friends for what they receive
Not for what they give,
Friends who are faithful I'd like to know,
Friends who are faithful
Say they are friends...
Yet friendship to me depends,
As a friend I like to give,
I like to be there in time of need.
As a friend I do my best,
With loving words give them rest,
As a friend I accept who they are,
As a friend I understand as well;
Pleased with whatever they venture in,
Encouraging them like a pal.

I would not be a friend
If I criticised
Or if I put them down
Or if on my face I had a frown.
I would not be a friend
If nasty words I spoke.
I know a true Friend
And how He's been there.

Friendship with Him taught me things -
He taught me to be wise with love.
Those who don't accept it
Would not be happy above.
He taught me it is better
To love and to care,
Than leaving some-one in despair,
He taught me love is to be there,
He showed me love is everywhere,
In creation round about me,
In the birds of the air,
In the breeze and sea!
He showed me love still exists
Even if at times it does not seem to be.
He taught me love is so many things,
Not just words,
But something of ourselves we give.

So maybe love is distasteful
And turns some off,
But to most they welcome it
when they are lost;
So a friend is company
We may not be aware,
That God is Love
And He is always there!

He knows if true friends still do care,
'Cause he knows the hearts and minds
Of people everywhere,
So as comforting thought
He knows who is true,
He knows if we pretend too!

So a friend is to love and care,
And if one dislikes me
God is still there!
He's a faithful friend and true
He's there for me and you!

Another frustration which revealed itself to me was the way doctors made fun of some situations. Not all patients do things to harm themselves or hear voices but some patients hear voices which tell them to harm themselves if they do as the voices demand. This was one part I could not identify with until I attended a group discussion which was held sometime throughout the day. This particular hospital had their meeting in the mornings. It was the first time I was admitted to hospital and I was quite surprised at the variety of people that were placed in these hospitals. On this occasion, a really frustrated man,

out of the blue, began to express his terror. I'll never forget the words he used: "These voices — you don't understand — they are trying to kill me!" He was clutching his head, bending low and beginning to cry. My first thought was concern: "the poor man." A doctor, some nurses and even a Priest were present at that meeting and I waited for an answer from one of them, as this man needed help. Nothing! The incident was made light of, with laughter from the doctor. Although I don't remember the trivial comment that was made, I do remember the guy shaking his head and repeating "You don't understand, you don't understand." The truth was they really did not understand, nor were they understanding.

As an adult, one thing I disliked in the hospitals, was being treated like a child. I was partially comforted by the fact that even others who visited noticed this and commented that it was not right.

My experience of being in these hospitals was not by choice. I was forced to committal like many others who enter. My times in hospital occurred after physical and mental abuse from my home situation. That is now in the past and I am one of a small minority who saw it through and recovered. Only a

very small percentage achieve the privilege of leaving the hospital and treatment behind. Some will suggest it is a little achievement, however those who understand what it involves know that it is a big task. I know where my gratitude starts. Being thrown into lock-up it is no pretty picture. It is distressing beyond anything words could ever describe. You become a victim being told that you deserve it. Who in their right mind would not fight the terror of being locked up and having their freedom forced away from them?

When I was first taken into hospital it only took the doctor about ten minutes after he spoke to me to make his diagnosis. After years of not knowing, I was overwhelmed. He was certain his expertise and knowledge was without question and so he made arrangements for me to be admitted. Terror and fear are minor words in comparison to how I was really feeling.

What would you do in a case like this? I prayed, because that was how I was taught, what I believed and what I knew worked for me! I was fortunate to have a mother who guided me in the direction of God when I became interested. Over the years I only

believed more strongly as I embraced a personal prayer life and developed the spiritual side of my existence. Especially in circumstances that are out of our control. Sometimes this world we live in does this to us.

My prayer was, “Heavenly Father, I’m scared. I have no-one who understands, but I know You do!” I was upset with the awkwardness of the whole ordeal. Only one request entered my mind : “Lord, rescue me! Please rescue me.” In prayer I spoke about all my mixed up feelings and that I was afraid of the unknown. Well, I was rescued! Nature intervened with a flood and the hospital where I was suppose to go was actually flooded out, so I could not go there. I was very relieved because that particular hospital was no longer a threat. The flood may have been devastating for others but it seemed a blessing from God. I was rescued!

Little did I know I would end up in a different hospital where the doctor’s diagnosis would be totally different to the first. And the physician was just as positive about his opinion as the first doctor was of his diagnosis. Both of them seemed so sure they were right, but their reports certainly didn’t match.

Years later another top qualified specialist yet again diagnosed something different. I then recognised that they were just mere humans offering human opinions. Inside I seemed to be laughing at them and yet I knew better by this stage than to laugh out loud, as it would only have made my visit there longer.

These are the sort of happenings that go on which I call “games.” For example, in one of the last hospitals where I stayed, there was a nice young lady who had been there for some time and the doctor said she was ready to go home. With excitement she spread the news amongst the inmates, included me. I was thrilled for her as everyone looked forward to the day she could leave and she was no different. Soon, however, she returned to say that the doctor had changed his mind and she needed to stay longer. I could see that she was feeling quite down and very disappointed. Although her hopes had been high they were now suddenly stripped away by the broken promise of her doctor.

Then it was my turn to be dismissed from hospital. It was natural for me to share the good news and I didn't think anything was wrong in doing so. As I

shared my excitement with her she whispered “Don’t act too happy.” “Why?” I asked out of curiosity. She earnestly replied, “Because that’s what I did and he said I was on a high.” I share this with you, dear reader, because this is no joke - it actually happened. Of course it was really hard for me to play it low when I was so happy to be leaving. It seemed silly to have to act that way in front of the doctor as I had been in there for four months and I didn’t want to blow my chance of leaving. One question the doctor asked before I departed was rather strange. He asked if I was always happy. They had filled me up with drugs (to the hilt, it seemed) during the time I was there because I appeared too joyful.

When I was almost at to the point of giving up, my mother was the support I needed as she would always encourage me to pray. She would have just the right words for the moment I needed them and she would remind me how important it was for me to remain patient and calm. But I was so sick and tired of the drugs that were suppose to make me feel better doing the opposite to my body. Living with these drugs was not a easy way of life and I got very tired of it, so the use of some other tactic

was worth a go. (I later found out this tactic was a form of reverse psychology). I tracked down the doctor who committed me to the months in hospital (it was supposed to be only for one night) and gave me the medication. I asked him for more drugs and when he seemed amused by it he asked me why? My smart reply was “I want to get of my face! (use the drugs to hide reality)” He questioned me as to whether it did that for me, and I said, “Yes, even better than the real thing.” This may have been a smug answer, but I could no longer tolerate the strength of the medication that I was being given. I hated these drugs, I really did!

He walked away and the next lot of tablets I received were the milder ones that I had taken during my first encounter in the hospital years before. A relief for me since it gave me a break from the terrible side effects of the stronger medication. When I had previously complained about side effects, I was told, “Its just something you will have to live with!” Not a good answer for somebody that is suffering with side effects. What hurt most was that the doctors did not seem to take it to heart — they just did not even seem to care in the slightest. In fact, I was told several times I would be on drugs for the rest

of my life and this was cruel. They didn't really know that and so it hurt me deeply. These were not the worst words that were said to me or others and I tried my best to overlook it even when I believed otherwise. After all, I did have faith that I could take hold of things which I just knew they did not understand. It was because of my faith that when I tried to make them understand and shared it, it became their problem and so I did not take it personally. I can gladly say I am now drug free and have been for years now. Life is far better without any medication of any sort. It took quite a while for things to return to normal, mainly because the drugs were in my system and because of the result of so many years of hospitalisation (on and off), not to mention the effects of chemical withdrawal. Doctors may say these drugs are not addictive yet for me they were. Anything that is making you dependant on them must be.

Because there is One being in heaven that rules Heaven and earth, our lives start to be content and at peace, even if odds are against us. We can know this much: he understands. Maybe even He has a purpose behind it all. Scriptures teaches us that he does and we can make that personal. The reason for

this written book (the Bible) is to encourage people in circumstances that may not be too pleasant. Sometimes frowning upon those going through hardship is not wise, for no matter who they may be, we all live and learn.

Tender Loving Care (T. L. C.) goes along way. Certainly not all things are explainable at the time and may even appear way out of bounds. Living creatures are to be respected as God has put into the intelligence of mankind to love one another. Listen if there is a cry for help. By not shoving or taking control, nor speaking rudely or abruptly to victims, I know there would be a difference in both response and healing. Look closely and notice these people in Mental Institutions and you will see that they have all been victims sometime somewhere in their lives.

Because the abusers are the ones that seem to remain free, there does not seem to be any fairness in this world at hand. This tends to leave hurt people with their lives shattered and confused when they are punished again for no good reason. We should treat people as people, we were meant to love and care for one another. Loving is only found when love is first given! Where did it all begin? No one

on this earth is one hundred percent right. Even doctors are human and they are capable of making mistakes. Common sense makes us realise people in high positions are still only human and we patients are too.

These patients need caring and a sensitive ear willing to listen to them. Anyone with an understanding nature, willing to exercise devotion to a variety of individuals who are really hurting can do wonders. But such people are hard to find, simply because inmates have a label— either society is scared to get close to them, or they are laughed at or looked down upon. A few caring individuals have genuine concern and they deserve credit and praise.

To care for these people whether doctor, nurse, friend, family or society in general, each must remain completely honest, because inmates have already learnt to mistrust. Some may have put them down and made them feel abnormal. As workmanship of the Creator, humans are not to be experimented on — we are here to love one another with Tender Loving Care.

Love Drug

A Love Drug is what we need to see,
For the world is becoming like a turmoil.
Oh Lord save our souls, help us let go!

Lord Jesus you know my heart,
I've loved you from the start.
The Lord gave me eyes to see
That the devil was testing me.
A "love drug" is what I need,
A love drug is what we all need,
A love drug like Thee, O Lord!
You are the only drug I need
To help and motivate me!

Lord Jesus, You are King of All!
You are awesome in every way,
So fill me with Love till I overflow today.
You're the best drug of all -
I've tried them all - I could have been lost
But the Love drug (God) came to my aid!
So God, my Awesome Wonderful Friend,
I'll thank you to the end.

Nurturing

During my recovery I discovered more than one source of peace. The most obvious was the peace given by God. Another was soothing music. Learning to listen to meditation music is not natural at first but once the habit is formed it is very beneficial. Meditation music comes in different forms - there is a quite a variety and it is becoming more and more popular. Meditation music gives a beautiful environment within the home, it soothes and calms, allowing a very tranquil surrounding to occur with the wonderful sounds of water and nature at its best.

Any sound that you can appreciate in nature can be invited into your home by cassettes or CD's. By listening to this kind of music at times of stress the sounds really have a most wonderful effect on the body and mind. The best approach, if time is really able to be put aside, is a routine of body relaxation with a cassette containing a voice going through instructions for relaxation. I sometimes found it difficult at times to slot this into my busy life. Recently, I am learning from my body that it is really has been worth the effort. I was always aware of the benefits and I needed to remind myself that it has a place in

my life. I used the method of relaxation with soothing music to restore my body and mind when my health was suffering. It was during this recovery time that I realised that the time had come when I really wanted to work on my mind so my body would heal. My children really did not like this music very much, but over time they too were able to enjoy it, and use and benefit from it themselves at times. Yet a challenge of a regular habit really is the best, and it just becomes another part of improving our lives.

Life is too good to be wasted and I found that after my health returned, I really began to enjoy life and I still look for ways to do this as the spice of life is variety. We need to find this for ourselves. In those traumatic years of my life when I was very lost, finding who I was and what was my desire in life was not easy, yet when I found the key to spice up my life through seeking God and through variety, I found that I was able to be creative in areas I had never dreamed of — then life became fun. Prayer and meditation is still helping me in this area. In thinking about it now, I realise that the most important part of my meditation was the spiritual communion with God. If it was not for this side, even with the music and talking tapes the progress would

not have occurred. These are very closely connected. I only wish that I had known about this earlier in life.

One example of when meditation was of special benefit occurred one day when I was at home with my sons. It seemed that fighting was on the menu this day with my eldest boy becoming very upset. When I asked him to stop, the argument ended and he left the room. I did not like seeing him so upset although we expect arguments between brothers to occur. What hurt him most I think, was that I prevented it from continuing. My eldest boy always seems to be hurt more if he knows it has upset me, sometimes believing it that I have taken sides with his brother. What parent does not know this situation, when we as parents do our best to maintain harmony? Well, he choose to go in his bedroom. The sound of meditation music was then heard coming from his room. To cut the story short, he came out a very different young man. He was much more relaxed, was at ease with himself and with others. It was wonderful to know he used this technique and for me to see for myself the example I had set as a mother.

Another time his grandma had cancer. When we visited her, he became upset seeing her so ill. The same son departed with tears in his eyes and his grandfather went to follow him. I suggested to grandfather that he leave him, as I knew my son had gone out to say a prayer and regain strength. Which he did! Don't misunderstand me, this son is not perfect by any means, but he does have a sense of what is best and how to care and cope. Even though we are not always totally aware of why things happen, its good that we can still try our best in any situation with consistency in prayer and relaxing. This advice goes for anyone, but especially those that are sick have an even greater need for support from above.

It's just as important to continue with prayer and meditation after we have been restored, either from health, rushed lives or hectic daily living. Good times are very important to remember as this allows us to thank God, and dwell upon fond memories.

A particular fond memory that I enjoy recounting is the last time I was in hospital. It relates to the nurses in Royal Brisbane Hospital, Ward E4. The reason

being is that they had a genuine desire to help. They took the time to talk. They suggested ideas to help you sleep without drugs. They were very kind and always ready to help out where they could. They even created interesting things for the patients to do and they took the time to do them with them. For me, this proved to be both beneficial and constructive.

Music was one of the interesting things we did together, even the nurses joined in. A male nurse played the guitar and he also taught us some new songs to sing. He was my favourite nurse as he was always full of smiles. A local G. P., after he had finished work also joined in with us. He was an excellent guitarist. Although someone in his position did not need to spend the time with us, but when he did it made it fun for all of us. We had a fantastic time singing and laughing with the nurses and patients joking around with one another.

Words cannot express how it made us feel as patients, knowing that they really saw us as individuals not mere numbers. Another male nurse allowed me to help to fold the sheets and place them onto the shelves where they were handy and ready for us

to get at any time. He showed me that he appreciated what I was doing to help. At that time, the female nurses were a special bonus. Two in particular really stood out to me and they became more like girlfriends as these two had the most desirable traits of character.

Red Cross would bring toy making kits around to the wards. If anything caught your interest in the way of craft, there was a selection to choose from and I chose to sew a pattern of a dolphin. This nurse saw me make the toy and liked it so much that she asked if I could make her one. She offered to pay me for it I did not accept as I realised that this nurse was just trying to be generous. She selected a platypus. This craft was hand-sewn and I made it for her because she did not like hand sewing nor did she really have the time. We both laughed as she revealed to me what she wanted to do with it: she wanted to do something romantic yet funny to surprise her boyfriend. I was rather tickled with the idea.

After I had completed this toy she was thrilled with how nicely it turned out. I was happy because it placed a smile on her face, and her approval meant

a lot to me. We used to go and have cuppa's together at the cafeteria and really spend quality time going for walks and talking. Her position as a nurse made no difference to me, simply because she was enjoyable to be around. Making this toy was no big deal and to expect anything by way of payment was the furthest thing from my mind. Her big smile was a bonus to my reward as she placed a gift in my hand out of appreciation. Her comment was, "its not much", but the thought of her even presenting a gift to me was so precious. Opening the gift carefully I unwrapped a pair of beautiful earrings, very different to most. They were hippy style which suited me at the time. I gave her a hug and thanked her. Those earrings were worn constantly (until they fell apart) because it reminded me of the way that she made me feel special.

Another female nurse blonde hair, blue eyes and thin build came up to me with some nice white pants in her hands. She was very understanding when she realised that they wouldn't fit as I was a little larger around the hips. How can anyone understand what it is like to have nurses like this relate so well to a patient. Somehow we never expected little things like the gifts.

Another male nurse use to come to work with a leather jacket on after riding his motorbike. When he took it off, he was wearing his white nursing clothes underneath. He was very considerate of our addiction to cigarettes and would permit us to smoke in a certain room and keep watch at the same time to prevent us getting into trouble with the hospital administration. This may appear wrong, or may even something of little value, its all added up to our understanding of how much these nurses cared for our needs. Small favours sometimes add up to more than any big favour. A nice word in the right place, a hand squeeze or hug — these have value and meaning. These are special ways of giving love and showing you that you are accepted.

At times the drugs the nurses had to give us spoilt the environment but these wonderful nurses made it bearable. I'm so grateful for the loving efforts they made. I hope these nurses never tire of doing good work as the simple humbleness they demonstrated was more precious than anything else. I know God will bless them tremendously because of the lovely memories they have left with us.

We each had our doctors but we did not always blend

as easily with them as we did with the nurses. One doctor saw me more frequently than others did, yet we were still on different levels. My family members and I didn't seem to click with him straight away. He said I would be in there for one night and it turned out to be for four months. I confess that I was upset when I first entered the hospital because of the abuse which had taken me there in the first place.

My next-door neighbour came in for a visit and asked what I was doing there. She was disappointed at my being there because she was aware of the abuse I was receiving and thought it was unfair. I thought so too at the time and remained upset. After the admission procedure I put myself to bed to sleep the sleep of emotionally exhaustion. A nurse came and woke me up to give me some medication. Half asleep I took what was handed. There is no choice in these places anyway!

My father and his wife came for a visit and my father stroking my head was all that I was aware of. He was concerned when he noticed that I was trying to wake up to talk to him but the drugs were so strong I could not even move. I tried so hard to speak and open my eyes, but there was nothing.

Now a different battle was going on, the fight within me because of an overdose of medication. Eventually from trying so hard, I fell into a state of exhaustion and totally drifted from my father's touch. When I awoke the drugs had worn off enough for me to slowly and very drowsily rise from my bed and I headed down the hall to find the nurse who gave me the drugs. Even though I was extremely weak, I was keen to let her to know the heartache this had caused me and my parents. I began to cry because of all the hurt, and I continued crying to the nurse and tried to explain that I could not utter a word or respond in anyway. I was also concerned about the lingering effects it would have on my Dad. I could hear the quaver in my father's voice as he tried to contain himself and this was the last thing I remember hearing before I lapsed under the influence of the drugs again. I was distressed that my father even saw me this way especially as the drugs were so intense.

The nurse reminded me that I came in quite upset and needed the drugs to relax. I admitted to her she was right, but reminded her that I was already relaxed and sleeping when the medication was prescribed for me. Her response was a graceful, "I'm

sorry.” This took me by surprise and I stammered, “It’s not your fault,” It was the Doctor’s order she was following. We began to talk and it was nice because I needed for her to understand why I had come in upset. There was a reason and she seemed nice enough to share my confusion. She listened and gently asked questions. By her doing this I was sorting things out for myself and at the same time helping her to understand me more. As our conversation drew to a close she said to me something I really needed to hear and to be aware of: “If he ever abuses you again either emotionally or physically leave him!” What had I allowed in my life? Was he really worth all this fuss and bother? Her last comment was going to be to my advantage “You deserve better!”, she said. Maybe at the time I did not think so, but she was right.

Nurturing goes along way. Just as these nurses came to care for me, I began to care for them too. These nurses, as a team, left such an impact on my life that it’s given me the inspiration to care more for others. I knew what I liked, and I held it close. They could see that I did my best to bring joy and a helping hand whenever possible because they were always making nice comments about it and encour-

aging me to just remain myself.

I thank God for this experience and for those nurses who at the time, seemed like angels or saints that brighten up people's lives.

Treasure Always!

Oh Lord, these nurses, how can I explain
The respect and love they gained?
They took the time,
They saw our need,
Of us they were not ashamed,
They did their best in everything!

They passed the test.
Let them be blest
With even more love
For others that come there to rest.
They had the hearts,
They had the presence of Gods love,
Let them never tire of doing good,
For them in there,
Help them, Oh Lord, to lift,
Others from despair.

Oh! What wondrous friends I found
In these nurses. All because
They love to nurture our emotions
Back to health.
You did that God!
But with them you helped
Because caring is more than a breeze -
It's taking time out to care for people's needs,
And you did that in the very way
You tell us to love each other:
As you love us today!

Beauty

Beauty in the world means so much,
Beauty - a body adorable to touch:
Beauty - it models us as pretty as can be,
Beauty that can never last you see,
Beauty is competitive in so many ways,
Beauty we desire the rest of our days,
Beauty, however, is truly unseen:
The beauty of loving chores is
The way it should be.

Cont...

Beauty is but a symbol,
Of that within you and me.
Beauty is not intelligence,
Beauty is not the best way to be.
Beauty is within our eyes,
Is it not?
The loveliness in niceness to adore,
Beauty of character forever more.

Beauty is not being vain, or lovely faces to gain,
Beauty is sometimes lustful
(To our dread and to our shame).
Beauty is to love,
To be kind, patient and wise.
Beauty is when
You have someone to care for, by your side,
Beauty is not really competitive
It's not to think you're the best,
Beauty is meekness to share.

You've passed the test,
In humbly believing that
Beauty is believing others are best!

The Biggest Difference

The single factor that makes the biggest difference in life is whether or not you have hope.

When you have hope you have a purpose to live. Yes, there were times when I felt I had no hope. At these times I knew a place where I felt safe. To be able to run for shelter was bonus - really, if it was not for this, (back then or even day by day) I would feel quite lost. I felt protected and loved, in this way it was a fortunate experience. During those days in times past that were extremely trying, I learnt that I could trust some “Being” on a higher throne. Of course there were times I felt like I had failed in doing so, but I still have a true Friend, that reaches me in my moments of despairing need.

I meet one lady when visiting a Mental Institution, who was most angry, upset and frightened. She had good reason to be as she was being admitted for life. Her heart was bitter and her anger was directed towards God because He did not directly give her the treatment she wanted. Her anger was not directed towards the family that were the cause of her being admitted, nor towards the so-called “friendly” neighbour that made a complaint regarding her doing

something in her own backyard. I could understand her desperation. I wished I could do something to help, but I felt powerless in this situation. These institutions have a great deal of power - a snare extremely impossible to escape from unless the right approaches are made. Anyone who knows the rules and regulations, knows what I am saying.

A woman once asked me, “How do they get out of there?” I know of no other way than prayer to escape and counselling to survive. A few have made the comment that it’s the devil’s ground. This seems very critical but such places really appear satanic and the only way to survive is to keep the inner spirit alive. One day the doctors will need to answer for the treatments they have given, not always with a free conscience. Some may laugh but one day there is just as much possibility as not, that they may need to face a day of reckoning.

God’s compassion, sensitivity, understanding our pain, His limitless acceptance, are what keeps him near. His best qualities, are enough for us to desire, need and want in our lives. Everything which is good, honest, loving, encouraging, comforting and helpful comes from Him. Anything less, like fear,

doubt or destructiveness comes from another direction. Those who worship evil obviously believe there is a God. If you don't believe either in God or Satan, then the existence of this planet will come into question in the end. Scientists are not people whom I desire to put my trust in as they are mere men and women seeking solutions for questions. In some cases the treatment of animals is their only look in the book. Other people are cruel, vindictive and nasty yet they just unhappy souls searching for answers.

A more positive approach is to seek peace. To be at peace we need to find it, to create peace we need to know it. There are those around that are just not satisfied with peace, they want conflict. Yet we can be at peace with ourselves: an influence that leaves a mark in our hearts. Not depending on our deeds but depending on Someone who saves.

Responding to love for some is really difficult. Gentleness, softness, soothingness are not just some down-graded idea, there is beauty in receiving love! If these people were once this way, being treated harshly may have set off a human reaction: they become tougher - but there is still choice we make,

to allow love into our lives. This can create havoc if we decide not to let go of bitterness. This is what I see as Satan wanting to dominate. Those that get to know God cannot be that way: they forgive, they help. They are ones who demonstrate the kindness which is so often taken for granted. God knows what this is like - He relates to every word.

Christians are not perfect. They only want to know their God on a daily basis and show they care by continuing to love others. This can be in different ways for each of us. There is a golden rule, "Love others as you do yourselves," or better yet, "Treat others like you, yourself, would like to be treated."

Finding forgiveness is a big part of healing for ourselves, and beneficial to us in the long run. When this was brought to my attention, I did a lot of internal wrestling. So many had hurt me and disappointed me. Also, when it comes to the ones we really trust deserting us, we are really hurt by their rejection. I saw this as their problem, not mine. What I was holding onto was resentment, becoming annoyed when others failed to care for me. This now seems silly, and it was my problem. God showed me it was His problem too, because He understands my hurt, and He wants to correct it. If people were aware

of God's love they would share it generously, so now I tend not to take rejection personally if it does occur. There are many who accept me and I do not need 100% approval for myself but I do for my Christian beliefs and my God.

My family is everything to me, I love the family tree I have, and I count myself blessed. God's presence makes the biggest difference, what He bestows is what really matters to me. I coped, not by self-efforts alone, but I coped because a Helping Hand never gave up on me. And in return I learnt to love myself, which made it possible for me to love others and have more acceptance of them, even if rejection took place - this is a part of love.

God makes the biggest difference to the way I live my life now. Not perfectly but at peace. I am able to express myself in poetry, I write a lot, I enjoy singing and writing songs, I cook (that's a bonus), I even enjoy the challenge of the kitchen. I work hard when I am able even though I do not need to, being on a pension. The greatest satisfaction I get is to appreciate life and enjoy each new day as it arrives. Still placing my time with God first as the day would not be the same without him. I feel prepared for the

day's events not even knowing what is about to occur. When I was under treatment I was not able to do a lot of tasks. When my limbs weakened and I couldn't use my legs, I pulled myself around by my arms just to do the dusting. With God on my side to help, I was ready for a fight difficulties. I was not going to lie down and place myself in a box while God continued to give me strength to live and breath. It was an effort constantly, every second was counted, every minute a battle, every day was a prayer learning patience, waiting for (hopefully) the break I need. Ten years later, my health began to return. Four years of life to catch up. These were what seemed like lost years, yet they were not at all. It is not always a breeze in life, but breezes are something God really knows about. He can change the tide, whether we're having hard time or a good time - we can find the Biggest Difference!

Turmoil (1)

Though the road seems in turmoil,
Yet I will trust,
In the One and Only above,
Who loves me.
I know that much.

The road may be smooth,
It may be tough,
It may be the hand,
Introducing a lovely touch -

So it seems that turmoil came
As quick as I let go again,
So I can be forever
In His arms.
No-one to move me,
From His charm.

Alone I may be,
Yet not alone
With Him who is within me.
So peaceful nights
And peaceful sleeps,
Knowing it will be
A steady road ahead of me.

How can it seem,
All is washed away,
When to trust is to believe
With me He'll stay?

Maintenance And Balance

Balance is very important in our lives. Sometimes hard lessons need to be learned to experience a more stable way of life.

I was always a stubborn kind of person, not proud of it, yet relieved that my stubbornness taught me some really valuable lessons. While on medication it is really impossible to remain balanced as the drugs cloud the mind, especially the drugs that tend to suppress action and emotions. This is extremely harmful although the good they do is to block our pain. Mainly the emotional pain, this I do admit, for a time it seemed drugs were the only way to cope under real pressure. To not care is a way of escaping the pain of thinking. For some of us, this is real. Depending on the life experiences on this earth, some go through far more pain than others. It is not always a fair world that we live in but there is Help at hand.

It takes strength to admit we need help at times, it doesn't take courage to be afraid to admit it to ourselves. While on drugs it is really a task to live life normally - to not be able to follow instructions on a

simple recipe packet or not being able to cook or care for oneself is a big problem! It's through no fault of their own that medication prevents their normal routine of life. Lack of concentration is very much part and parcel of using drugs. Ever tried to stand at a stove when after five minutes you're tired and need a seat? Its a hassle! You feel very worthless, to not be able to care for yourself, let alone care for a family. It feels that life is better off without you in it. Not true! Even if those thoughts occur.

Side effects these drugs have are plentiful. Being unable to drive with confidence, afraid to step outside, or to be in massive crowds, having blurry eyes (making it really tiring to read), being really drained in body, being able to walk only small distances at times, appearing lazy, feeling washed out and letting your appearance become shabby. Drugs do this and more. The worst part is not being able to just be yourself. Feeling compressed and having the drugs moulding you like a clam.

A friend of mine, now an adopted mother, went through mental institutions for forty years which is a very long time. The way we first meet was through

mutual friend who brought her around for a visit. As we sat at the table talking, I noticed that she was just looking and smiling at me. As we spoke we found that we understood one another through having been in the Mental Institutions. Even though we had not actually come across each other in the same hospital, we could relate to one another well as there was a bond of caring and understanding. I was not at this time being treated yet I was still on my way to recovering and doing well. This made no difference to her. She admired me and we've been friends since (in a mother/daughter kind of relationship). She has had to fight her way far more than I needed to and for more years. She is a Catholic; a very devoted Christian and friend to those around. I always believed there were others worse off than myself and to live life in contentment is found in asking God to help.

It's exciting seeing my friend progress, she believes strongly in having faith, and she has said many a time that she could not have survived without God. God allows enormous affliction to come our way, but in her I saw strength not of her own. We could always relate with our mutual Christian love and even with differences in our beliefs, we have never

once conflicted. With her progress now, and thinking about the beautiful natured person she is, I remember a true story she shared with me:

There is a certain operation that is performed, when doctors believe they have done all they can do. Years ago this operation was suggested for her. She was admitted to the hospital where this operation would take place, but God did not allow it, neither did her husband who had stood faithfully by her during her years of illness. A gentleman spoke to her husband, pleaded for him not to allow them to do it to her. He shared his heart-ache and yet allowed the operation to be performed on his wife. She now stared out in space and appeared useless all together, yet they said the operation would help. So she could no longer do anything, she was like a vegetable not being able to recall a thing. She had a totally blank life and a husband feeling bad for giving permission for the operation, yet by sharing this experience he was instrumental in saving another's wife.

This lady and friend is very special and one day I hope, with her talent in writing or even poetry, that she shares more of herself and enjoys what gifts she has been given. What I learnt through this friend after so many years of treatment is “Don't give into

pressure”. She has not allowed the treatment make her give in to the fight, she is a fighter and she will win in the end. “Fight the good fight of faith!” There is always hope in sight, it may not be seen, but it is worth believing.

While on medication, fast food seems easier than the preparation of food at home. I know it is extremely hard to prepare your own but just remember it is not laziness as much as the side effects of those strong drugs. It hurts when people do not understand, but I have discovered that it’s only because of their ignorance or lack of knowledge. Do your best not to hold it against them and this will make it far easier on yourself. Some may not understand how hard it can be for recovery. Progress depends totally on the individual and not to ever give up is a good start. Even if at times you may want to, keep striving, and if a prayer comes to mind its there for to help. Take courage!

In a way these people are already courageous since they are still surviving even under extreme pressure.

To maintain and balance your mind and nerves, do

whatever you possibly are able to. Listen to your body - if you are able to walk, go at a pace and distance you're comfortable with. Never over do it - exercise where possible. Relax whenever you feel the need. If you're too weak to do much, or even not mobile, then find comfort in prayer (I used prayer mainly during those times).

Instead of watching television, place meditation music on while the TV is going but turning the volume down on the box may work. Music should be at a volume where it best suits you. Really try to avoid watching shows with a lot of negativity in them, be selective in your programs, place good shows in your mind - Try you best to leave out anything unpleasent. Most times while you're on medication, the television seems to fill in time.

There are other interests to take one aside, so work at finding something. It does not need to be a big project. Each individual has likes and dislikes - keeping your house peaceful is great for recovery. Surroundings make a difference that's for certain. If you like writing, by all means do it - just write from your heart - express yourself, even if you're not much of a writer, try doing it anyway. This will re-

lease tension and you'll feel far better, even if you just keep it private and throw it away afterwards, its still worth the effort, or you may wish to keep your writings for a record of your progress.

If you're a believer in God, writing letters addressed to him is really healing. Normally some say to set a target, I would prefer to suggest do it with ease - enjoy what you do when you decide to do it, go by your inner-self and how you know that you will cope. If you choose any target at all, remember it's your mind and body that you're focusing on. Keep that in mind. You may even like to try gospel music as it is uplifting. Heavy metal or loud hard music will only irritate your nerves further (which is what you are trying to avoid). These are only suggestions to encourage the repair of your nerves. Simple methods, so you can compare these for yourselves. If you find it helping, then its been worth trying it out for a while. Then you're able to decide whether you'd like to continue these ideas or not.

Medication becomes such a part of your life, especially if you're on them for a number of years, that a fear of detachment occurs. In case a relapse occurs, finding a G. P. and Counsellor in one doctor

(one that is suitable to you and that you are able to trust) is my best advice. To go off your tablets instantly is not a good idea - go by your G. P., allowing him to be a mediator between your psychiatrist and yourself. The reason being, he is able to keep the psychiatrist informed of your progress and yet be able to moderate your tablets to your recovery. This takes time of course. Its a nice way to stabilise, without being threatened with admission to the hospital.

Once you are comfortable with the G. P. giving counsel, at the same time your trust in doctors in general will improve. Later on it in this book I will try to explain why I believe counselling is necessary. Counselling by a G. P. is a very sensible approach, without any threat yet benefiting from his understanding of the medical side also. They do very good line of work which is extremely helpful. Once again, progress depends totally on yourself. The doctor is not there to heal you, he/she is there to assist. An ideal counsellor, even if a medical practitioner, will be a good listener. Most of all he/she will ask questions of you, for you to find your own answers, the ones that best suit you. No-one has the answers for you, that's something you will have to learn. So this

approach is really not scary or harmful in anyway.

Withdrawal from drugs is not nice to go through as these drugs are addictive and we become very dependant on them. Your body is a magnificent setup, so it's helpful to follow your own impressions. Learn to listen to your body and how it feels. Allow the doctor to know how you are feeling and be as open as you possibly can allow yourself to be. Be calm and give no excuse to be filled with more drugs. It is only out of consideration for you I am reminding you of this - it's very important!

Work out your own system of relaxing. Marijuana does not help, be gentle on yourself if this habit has formed in your life. Don't condemn yourself but remember to still work through as best you can. One day it may well leave as you start liking yourself more. Its easy to justify smoking it when the medication is far stronger. Once your life is more in order, you'll find it easier to live a normal life without it. There is much more fun, more creativity and happiness without drugs in your life. There may come a time when you decide to leave it behind. When you're ready! All mind-altering drugs are harmful and it's very difficult to live a normal life while on

these drugs. That's the truth! Now I know the difference although I could not comprehend it while doing the habit.

Take baths! Warm baths to rest up in and read in while you're bathing. Drinking hot milk helps the sleeping pattern. It's natural deep sleep that's best. While on drugs or medication the sleeping pattern is not deep, even sleeping tablets do not rest your body as well as they may appear. Eat a variety of healthy food, including dried fruit and nuts, with nourishing vitamins in it, also juices and plenty of water. Really try your best to arrange a real variety in meals and eat at regular times. With these efforts in making your life better, the doctors will be pleased as it is positive. It should be encouraged by them, and they should understand that it's an improvement. You will be pleased with yourself, and thank God for the natural ways He has created for our benefit.

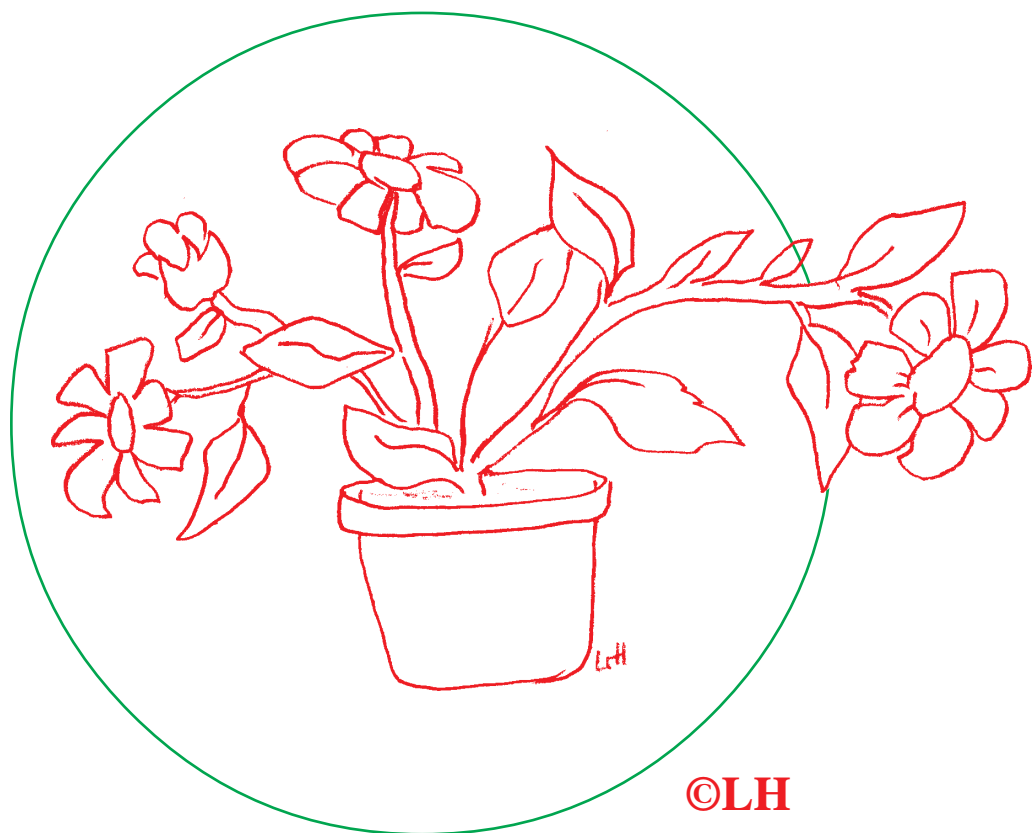
Walking and swimming will, little by little, refresh your life. Just do your best, walking and swimming is not a competition but an enjoyable challenge for your recovery - go by you own ideals. All you can do, is your best and that's good enough.

Being positive is really important. Positive reading, positive surroundings and positive thoughts mean positive living to the best of your ability. If anyone puts you down, or is negative towards an improvement in you, then pass them by. Be content with yourself for doing your best. If any changes are made that you like and these are working for you, then accept that other's approval does not really concern you. Your only concern is how you feel about yourself. Allow your individuality to grow and your independence will improve. Don't concern yourself if others think you're out of the norm, they may be used to seeing you slowing down and appearing vague, therefore the change for the better may come as a surprise, to not only you, but to your friends, family or even your doctor at first. Don't become anxious, believe in your positive new life-style and be pleased with your every effort, no matter how big or small. It's all the same.

Real loving friends, family, even a doctor who cares will encourage you if they're sincere. Seek company that is a positive influence. Do not allow anyone to dishearten you, or discourage you. Stay clear of them as it's not worth the friction. No-one has the right to take away the desire to improve your-

self. Work your way through each day as it arrives.

I hope I have helped in some form to start off on a good basis. The reason why I have personalised this for those recovering, is that they need to understand the approach that worked for me, and while explaining it to others, they will be able to encourage and give complements to their own progress. Be aware, it's a lot of effort to these patients to even attempt to recover. My heart is with you all,



Find Happiness

Find happiness in the simple things of life,
A walk, a swim,
Soft music, good food,
All different things,
Find happiness, and the key is
Trusting, praying as you walk this ground.
Don't be scared,
Don't be ashamed,
Look at how wonderful
You were made.

See the light at the tunnel you may dread,
Walk closely with courage,
Softly tread.
You will get there if you don't give up,
The One who loves you,
Is waiting to help you start,
If alone, look to the One above!

Adjusting With Ease

Isn't it nice when you can write letters, do chores, or work, take care of gardens or indoor plants, to cook, or enjoy outings? These are limited in patients lives but if they desire to enjoy life there is a way.

In the last chapter we talked of doing whatever we like at a steady pace. Sometimes, because illness has taken hold so strongly, its very tempting to race and push yourself to recover quickly. Beware of these times, never over do it. More than likely it will set you back. Always remind yourself to listen to your own body. It has been used to taking it easy and to exert energy will, more than likely, set you back and you will feel let down. Work hard, but if you need a break, take it! There is always the next day or two, possibly even next month. This is not really bad and it's good to know your body's limits. As you set a pace that is comfortable, every moment can be enjoyed. Appreciation of life will start within your own heart and home.

Never look at your shortcomings, we all have them. I found sharing with my Saviour a great resource because then I was free of any burdens. I guess I

chose Him because He overlooked my faults and saw my need far more. There are plans ahead, so just trust in who you are - you're a worthwhile creation like everyone else. Sometimes doubts occur. Hand it over to Him who says, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Your life will be enjoyed with these changes, especially after hard times. Have you ever heard the saying, that when near death and health returns, life is appreciated more fully? That is really true. There are lots of years to catch up on. Just give yourself time, there is plenty. If you used to like reading or studying, you may well be able to do it again, strive to do the best of your ability only, and that which your body allows with ease.

The hardest area I personally found, was to accept the way I was. Never, ever, put within your mind not liking yourself, so that wanting to be like someone else occurs. To compare yourself with others is only harmful to yourself. Be happy with who you are! Your hair, your eyes, your build was meant for you, this is the way you are. As long as there is a expectation to be like others, your life will never be

content. Your personality suits you as a individual - you are who you are. Do not envy, but be grateful for certain traits and looks you have, that belong to no other. We are all unique in our own ways.

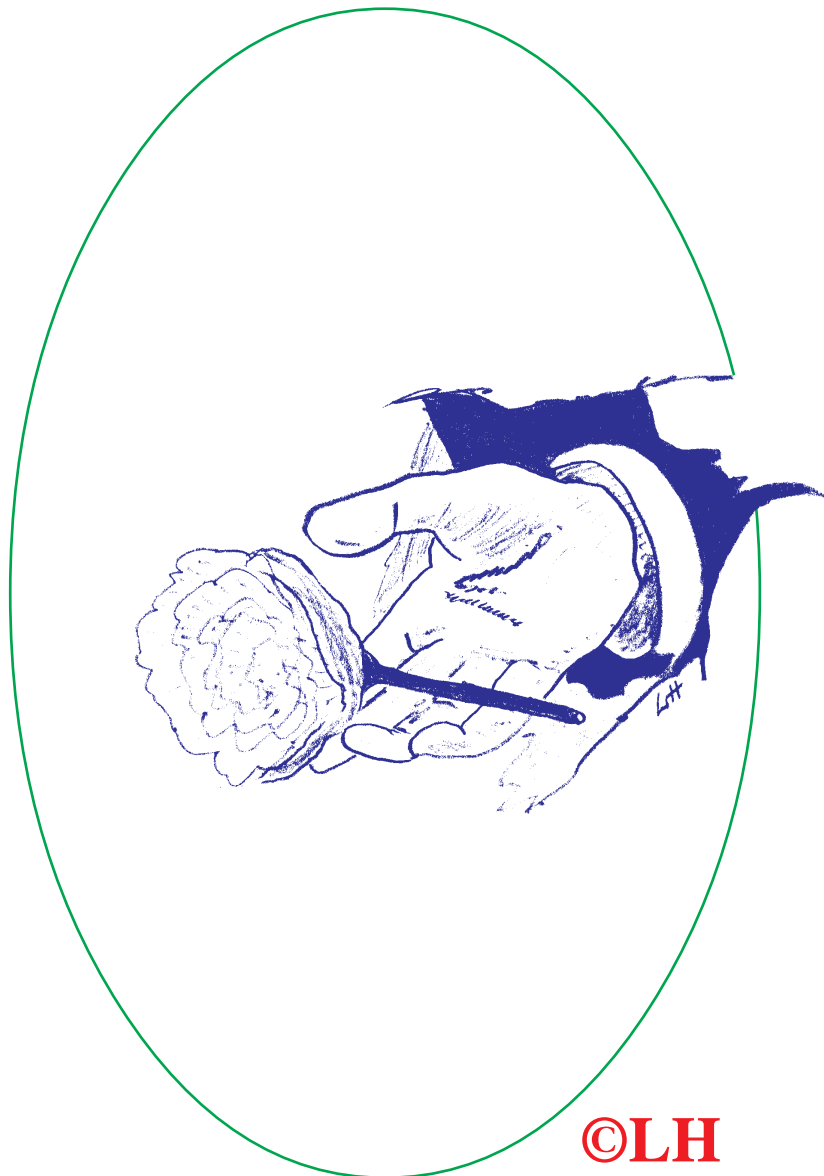
I'm going to share a story with you, personal as it may be, it will enlighten you as to how to be happy with yourself. I was crippled. There was a time I could not walk, talk or write. It seemed my body had just shut down and my nerves were shattered. Living under extreme conditions, that doctors were not fully aware of, medication had suppressed my ability to express myself and I had a fear of honestly opening up. While in hospital I needed to be carried because of my disabilities.

I was placed in front of the television. Great! A beautiful lady doing exercises with the most sexy legs and body in view. Not even knowing this lady, I felt a resentment for her arising within me. Sure others that were healthy enough to participate were enjoying exercising with her in their own homes. While I sat there crippled I was envying her abilities and her beauty. Straight away, I knew this was wrong. I requested leaving the TV and went off to pray. I had a problem - a big one. I needed help to accept

myself! What I was going through right then and there could not be changed. Acceptance of my situation was all I could possibly do at the time, and I wanted to accept. I was only harming myself if I did not. I began to thank the good Lord that I had hair (even if it was messy). I thanked him for my hands (even if they were weak). I just began to find within, thanks for every little thing I could possibly find. From then on I had more respect for who I was, even though I was crippled. In my heart I found a sense of gratitude instead of resentment. Now it felt far better, since I was accepting myself.

Where possible give complements to others that are truthful, you'll like yourself even more. As a Christian in particular, I find it's more pleasant, because it's doing what was intended for the reputation of Christianity. Anything less is destructive. It's important you like who you are and maintain that inner peace and satisfaction of liking yourself. Even if mistakes occur, be gentle try again. Others may find faults with you as we all have our faults - yet whether we allow those shortcomings to effect us or not, depends on us. We all struggle in different areas of our lives, but when we have a glaring fault, it hurts when it is pointed out time and time again.

Doctors in passing have commented that my faith is unusual yet admit that it has helped in the long run. Great progress has been made, allowing myself to feel inferior would only prevent the goals for the future. Find a way to like yourself, this makes adjusting easier, As for turmoil see beauty in it, not hardship.



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Turmoil (2)

Oh I see so many wonderful things,
This special artist brings.
I see turmoil in life,
Energies glow and flow -
I remember back when I first gave birth...
Oh such joy she did bring,
Then two boys to follow
Made my heart sing.

I may have lost all I had,
But that's not really true,
For turmoil does not last
It turns out not so bad,
For you see,
I found beauty in turmoil for me.
It taught me not to fear my enemy!

So don't be afraid of turmoiled days.
Life can be even more than some may say.
If turmoil brings you closer to heavenly things
Or within your heart, joy is the end relief...
Be content and brief,
Most of all, help others who grieve!

The Key To Coming Out

How many times do we hear put downs? We live in a very negative world these days. Not too much positivity seems to arise.

I would like to use two members of my family as illustrations: my mother and an uncle. My mother sang all her life with success in the area of country and gospel singing. She recently (during the last few years) has had trouble with her vocal chords. Not being able to find the cause, she has learnt to live within her limitations with regard to music. Fortunately, she learnt other instruments, which she is still able to enjoy at functions. Nevertheless this was difficult for my mother as her whole life was singing which she enjoyed more than any other interest. Her outlook has been to accept God's will for her life. Others remember her as the singer they loved to listen to. As trying as it is for her, the sound of music has taken her interest again. It is not easy, yet she does not give up trying. She is still able to help others in a different way with her music than the way she did before. She is a strong Christian and trusts the leading of her Father in heaven.

My uncle loves driving and has done a great deal of travelling. His driving was part his work and he enjoyed driving on his holidays. When he found out that he was going blind, he found it hard at first as driving was a passion and enjoyment to him. He does not know if he will pass for his license next year so he is thinking about buying a push-bike (with a motor on the back) to get round on. I have great admiration for his coming to terms with his sight diminishing and for seeking ways to cope.

To think and talk positively is far better than to think and talk doom and gloom into our own lives and the lives of those around us. How we are, effects others. Positive people like themselves far more than those who can't see any good when there is bad present. It's a skill to learn to overlook the bad, a skill that I'm still learning. There are always times in our lives when we have our ups and downs. That is normal, for everyone. Not to face your past may cause stunting of growth or any achievement. Each positive step in life will be placing your life in order. We all have the same choices and to discriminate is taxing on the discriminators. If they can not understand why, then why try to work it out? You would only be going around in circles.

Optimists are at times difficult to be around if we're feeling down or going through a hard time. Sensitivity is especially appreciated. To appreciate one another's feelings whether we understand or not, is a greater consideration.

For example, two girlfriends really had a long term relationship although one was a little reserved and the other outgoing. A difference developed in their friendship, but because they were dear friends, their friendship meant more to them than the friction. Therefore they were able to sort it out, remaining good friends and coming to an agreement. They spoke to no-one else about it (except me, as I was a mutual friend) yet it was sorted out quickly. What I adored about one with the outgoing personality, was that she valued her friendship with her girlfriend and allowed her to be comfortable with what she was going through. And she agreed to allow her more reserved friend to work it out within her own boundaries. The friend with the reserved personality I love and adore, because she was able to request what she needed, even at the risk of the friendship. If that had not been laid open, resentment would have caused them to separate. As it was, they

were obviously genuine towards one another, because a solution was found that best suited them and respected each other's feelings and limitations. It's nice knowing I was there for them as a friend, not to choose sides but just to listen with a few questions here and there, but it was really both of them that worked it out for themselves because of the friendship they treasured. Both of them will now have a stronger attachment as friends.

One comment I would like to make is about victims whose victimisation is disregarded. That was one common factor which I noticed with them all, including myself. No-one wants to be involved with their past problems and they give the victims additional stress and anxiety by only looking at the present. Going through and working their way out needs support. The fact remains if they choose to try to correct their lives, they will be more positive in other areas of their life where once they were weak. Working your way out creates a strength of character which was not existent before. In fact, these people may well have allowed themselves to be trodden on. Even the law is not enough support for victims. Teaching them to lean on their own strength to sort out their own lives will be benefi-

cial for their long-term growth. Suddenly they start thinking, acting and living for themselves, like everyone else does in society - blending in amongst the norm. Although this may take years, if there is a past history of abuse, people do learn to adjust and accept the changes as they occur. We acknowledge that some may not, nor ever be able to, comprehend how it works. We must just accept that it is their right. More times than not, others will notice a change for the better. You'll come out liking yourself far more and even the experience of hardship will be appreciated one way or the other.

What about obvious actions that are totally out of the normal? Quite a few times people have said they do some really peculiar things: run around in the nude, cross the roads not even noticing a car or picking rubbish out of bins. There are a lot of unusual things in this world. For example nudist beaches, drunks that do strange things at times and people even used to collect rubbish out of tips. To deny that these people can be confused would be a lie. But at the same time, by looking deeper within their lives, we may help by being more understanding, and make it easier for their recovery. This would be a nice area in which to see things change for those

interested in giving it a try.

If people are aware others may have not had an easy life, then we help them by admitting that we are altogether in this situation and they are not left in a boat alone. By just realising others have problems in their lives we can encourage them to sort it out. Many people being treated by psychiatrist have abilities. I saw some wonderful art, and crafts, singers and even dancers in the hospital. Within themselves and on a person-to-person basis most of them are nice people. A few may be aggressive because it's not nice to be pushed around. Some scenes are a natural response (even if your considered normal the reaction would be much the same), it is a victory to allow these people to explore a way of recovery. Within certain bounds, and of course, with doctor's assessment and direction.

The victory extends to the watchful eye of loved ones to experience the joy of recovery in the life of one, once shattered, becoming a full member of the family again and blending in with all those around. My father says that I have ventured where no-one else has trodden. I doubt that, but its the way in which he expresses his pride in me as I have grown.

My past seems very distant to me - I still can recall some of the happenings but it no longer hurts or disturbs me. If others delight in remaining in my past for whatever reason, then they are welcome to it. Some who may bring up my past either respect how far I've come or hold onto it and always remember me that way. It's not bad, it's sad. How we view ourselves is really what is important. The accomplishment thus far makes me grateful that God's compassion has helped me to get where I am as a reputation is hard to restore when its been scarred.

To think positive, talk positive towards yourself. This is not having a swollen head, it's more a conviction, an acceptance of promises from Scripture and within the heart (from God) and a belief in yourself. Most people if abused would become depressed. Eventually a decision for your own well being would be essential. I have always been a bubbly personality, only because I do my best to replace negatives with positives. For every negative - place a positive. If you find it hard, find a friend to help you, if they themselves are positive people.

We should not judge one another - from what I can see, it only causes friction. Of course, it is human to

do so at times I must admit but at the same time we need to be aware of it, so it does not affect us. Judging is like a sickness that some find harder than others to stop. Once I worked at improvements within my own life, the outside began to happen. Confidence in driving came back, talking without feeling inferior to others, exercise whenever I want to and singing in front of people again. I give my praise to my supporters and especially to my Lord.

Once, when I was in hospital, a doctor made a statement that I could go home if I stopped talking about God. Naturally, I could not accept this as He has been a part of my life since a young age and others who know me that are not believers accept this part of me regardless - and I accept them and their choice not to believe. This does not cause friction in our friendships by any means. Many that are given drugs are sent home to cope with life themselves, when its actually more difficult because of side affects. The task to get back to normal life is totally worthwhile You reveal certain parts of your self once certain parts of your life are faced.

Life is there to be enjoyed for these patients as much as anyone else. I felt it was just direction and under-

standing that was needed for more lives to heal. I could be wrong, but I guess. I'll never know until the input is made, to at least make an attempt. Just to trust and go by my inner heart. The presence of God day by day is with us in nature, in nice people around us and friends etc.. I place my life in Hands where I know I am safe. Someone who is there in your time of need is a friend indeed. We may perceive things differently but that doesn't mean that it's wrong. We are individuals - none of us are exactly the same. We are who we are, should we not be grateful that we are not all the same? This is what makes the world go round.

Find A Spot

Find a spot
To be alone
To do some searching,
Of your own.

Find a spot,
Or green field
Somewhere you may know
Silence will help you grow.

Find a spot
In loveliness to your eyes -
Your lounge-room, your bedroom
A beach - your place
Of choice to be alone.

Think for a while -
A search for a smile
For heavens door
To be opened for a while.

Relax be at peace.
The surrounding you set
With soft music,
You won't regret.

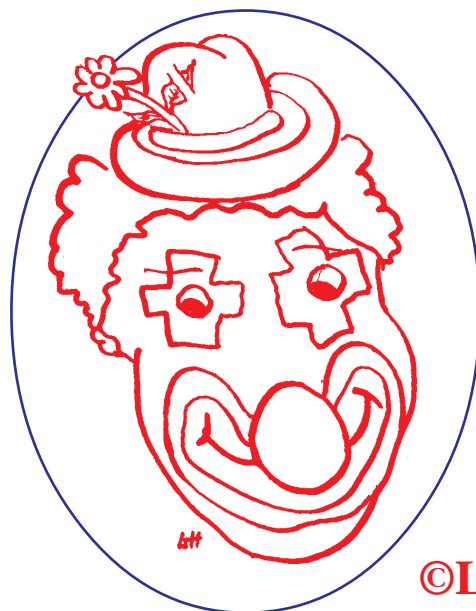
Find a spot,
Where cheerfully alone
You can be in total relaxation
And peace
That will make you feel free...
A spot we should all love
Is opened to you and me!

Heavenly thoughts are what cause the inner self to remain in good spirits. Heavenly thoughts are the key to peace, contentment, gratitude, love and joy. They are the hope we are so much deprived of in this world. All good things come from God. Whatever remains in our life to bring us comfort and hope is not a bad sign. No matter the trials or tribulations, hope is the sign that God above wants us to lean on him.

Many valuable lessons are taught through our relationship with Him. Being a Christian is having a relationship, by the Lord's grace as He alone is able to offer us our need during our lives. He alone supplies the strength and love needed to mend lives. Anything we may possess of good quality is His gift freely given. As Christians, we accept His salvation offered to us, not by means of what we do, but by His grace and love for us. Our response is to commune with Him and the giving of ourselves, our time and our energy. Towards the Lord we have an obligation to follow in His footsteps of caring. Only when His caring has been manifested to us are we able to return what has been given. He may use us as instruments even though our lives are not perfect

(although seen perfect by Him having been covered by salvation and grace).

Step by step, word by word, spending time with the Lord is the stepping stone, and by His encouraging words and direction He guides and teaches us along the path that leads to Jesus. If we looked at our imperfections, we would never even enter His presence, but heavenly thoughts (through contemplating upon His written word- the Bible) lead us to His throne where He works for our cause. Ours is to dismiss our doubts and never deny the love He so freely offered at our expense. He did it willingly, lovingly, with compassion that means more than just Him being crucified. This love is the key to His success and ours, we need not fret nor be ashamed as what needed to be done was fulfilled.



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Take Heart!

Sometimes a warm embrace enters me, when I think everything will be corrected. Certain gifts are given to each of us, because they have been entrusted in our care. What is written in this book is not mine, it's the Holy Spirit moving upon my heart. Whatever songs I write are inspiration as testimony fronts on the paper before me, it comforts even my own soul, and deepens the conviction of Gods love. The music flows with the words as an harmony that God knows suits me as an individual, yet He knows it's a benefit and enjoyment for others that desire to listen. Sometimes with correction, by altering the sound, work, or message, it can be disadvantageous when things God has given us are relayed by another's input. Often when I see someone with a talent I see it as theirs not mine and I don't desire to have it as it is better that it's being used by them. Simply, I would not do as good as job if I tried to be what I am not, or presumably what has not been given to me. We make more mistakes if we do not allow ourselves to be what God is making of us right now.

When I first started to write poetry, all I knew was I enjoyed doing it. Many others that write poetry enjoy it also as it's another means of expression. We

are each given what suits us as individuals. Once I was almost discouraged from writing poetry because I had asked for the opinion of someone I admired. I felt quite down after it had been picked to pieces and words being changed, then the good Lord revealed to me an understanding that if that person had written the poem he would have had a different way of expressing the same thing.

I'm so pleased I allowed the Lord to move upon my heart and encourage me still. If others write songs it would never enter my mind to tell them how to write words. It's a gift whatever they were impressed with is what I would enjoy. We are each given different abilities, to each of us our own. Years gone by all I wanted was for others to accept that I make mistakes, now I accept I still make mistakes. And I now allow myself to make them without my peace being broken.

My family have called me "Wonder Woman", but its not nice being called that because it's as if they never expect for me to tire out, and need rest to regain my energy. It's like things don't need to be done for me, 'cause I'm Wonder Woman. If only they knew! These days that nickname has eased off,

thankfully. Maybe it was that they prized me for the abilities I had and it may have been their way of saying, “Your great!” Its nice that they admire me for who I am, but I’m relieved that I realise that I am no Wonder Woman. We all have faults and have made errors in our lives. No-one is perfect in this world - certainly not me. I’m ready for insults at times and I’m ready for handling them as they come, maybe writing this book only a conviction and nothing else, yet I’m pleased the effort was still made against all odds and I have continued to believe.

A friend wrote some poetry of how she saw me and put it in a book made up and given to me personally. She always felt my poetry was better than hers, to which I reminded her that it (like her other writing) is just as good in a different way. No-one is better or worse than another as we are all the same but with different ways of expressing ourselves: different words, different singing. There is in God’s eye the same love for all - not favouring one more than another. The only difference with God, is whether we keep ourselves in his care, and if what he has given us is being used - that we are doing and responding with our best.

There is always beauty in expression no matter what art form it comes in. Creativity is nice within our lives - it may be in the garden, it may be within our home, possibly caring for others, or in the work that we do - needless to say we all have some creativity. As Christians, we have God our Father at the centre of it all, and we give Him our thanks. Others that look upon us see this and start desiring more of Him for themselves. Like plants vary, so do we as we grow. If we were all alike, the Artist of our lives would not be called a Creator, but He made each of us the way we are suppose to be, and He continues to mould us according to His purpose. Are you able to see the beauty He placed within you? Red hair, blond, black, or brown - it does not matter. It's the heart that He looks at most, not the shapely lovely figures, or the not-so-lovely, its the **you** He cares and loves. Shy, confident or talkative - He loves us all the same. He knows our need to be loved and to love others.

Take heart. I believe the Lord will be coming soon and it's certainly closer than when we first believed. If we are in connection with God, our lives may not be totally in order, yet we are safe as we daily walk and talk with God, He sees us move a step closer to

His power and love.

Take heart. Trust in His love for you! He is able to mend our wounds as in His care there is a certain completeness, knowing full well that without Him we would not be here at all. We do not think we are good, but know that the Lord is good. That's the way we are able to take heart. He does not condemn us, He gives us life.



May the Lord God be with you all, with whatever plans He has in store. May we never deny Him as saviour of our lives, may His grace continue in us, and prepare the way for His return. There is work God wants to do in our lives, and needs for us to do. He is faithful what He has started He will finish. Our father in heaven, and Jesus loves us all the same, His Holy Spirit will reveal His love when we desire it in our own hearts. Every day He awaits our invitation for Him to come, and for us to partake of Him in His goodness and mercy.

You've got To Laugh Your Way Out!

If Others Come Your Way

I wonder why
People leave church?
Is it Gossip?
Judgemental attitudes?
They say we suffer the consequences.
What will it be if the Lord comes
And says
“You were not there, it could have been Me.”?
Do not turn your back if others come your way.

The End. Amen