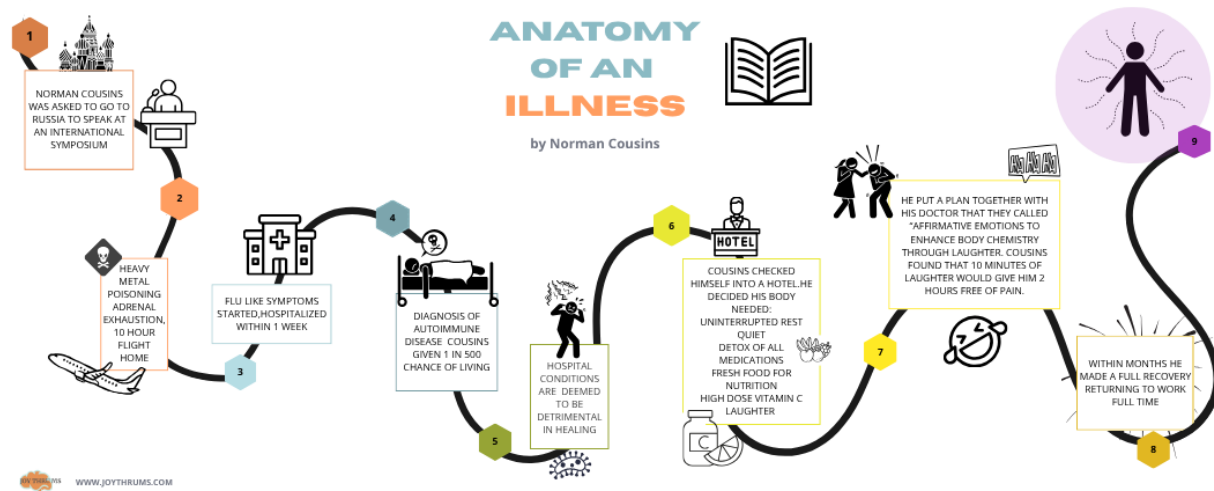


AN AUTOIMMUNE DISEASE JOURNEY AND ITS MIRACLES



Cathy O'Brien



I have been searching for answers to a few key health questions for a long time, the first being what is the cause of my daughters Multiple Sclerosis? The general consensus among doctors is always the same “we don’t know”. That doesn’t mean that there are no other theories floating around from alternative sources, my top 4 favorites are from Dr. Terry Wahl, Matt Embry, Anthony Williams and Dr. Gabor mate who all offer different but similar opinions. This search ultimately led me to Norman Cousins and his book, *Anatomy of an Illness*. It’s a detailed account of his Autoimmune journey and examination of **what** happened to him, **when** it happened, **how** it happened, followed by the doctor’s diagnosis, treatment plan, and Normans ultimate decision as to what he decides to do and why. This is the most comprehensive account of an autoimmune disease that I have ever read. Norman cousins was obviously a very smart man which would explain the impetus behind his questions and the answers he found. He was able to pin point moments that he determined were pivotal and created a map of those circumstances that he suggested were the cause of his illness. For anyone with an autoimmune disease, a condition that has been labeled the greatest medical mystery of this generation by Dr. Gabor Mate, this story can offer insight and hope.

THE ORIGINS OF AN AUTOIMMUNE DISEASE

Stress, Toxins, and Adrenal Burnout

In 1964 Norman Cousins, a well-known writer and author was invited to Russia for an international conference where he was one of the key note speakers. Back in 64 things were very different than today, cousin's hotel was located on a highway that was traveled heavily by diesel trucks headed for a construction project close by. He determined that because his hotel windows were left open throughout the night that he had been breathing a steady dose of diesel fumes considered to be toxic because of their metal impurities. The next factor in his story was when his (local Russian) driver got lost on the way to the convention where he was the evenings key note speaker making him several hours late and missing his speech. That stress combined with the fact that he wasn't sleeping well after breathing diesel fuel all night created a state of exhaustion. Lastly while he was waiting for his departing flight on the Airport Tarmac, he inhaled jet fuel from a passing plane that was headed toward the runway. Jet fuel is particularly toxic, potentially causing, irritation of the skin, nose, throat, and digestive tract, nausea, vomiting, even convulsions. All this as he was getting ready to board a 10 + hours flight home. During that flight he described having a slight fever and a general feeling of achiness which got worse by the minute. Within a week of being home he described how it became difficult to move his neck, arms, hands, fingers, and legs, after extensive tests his doctors admitted him to the hospital. While the various doctors consulted did not reach an agreement on the diagnosis the consensus was that Cousin was suffering from a disease of the connective tissue, all arthritic and rheumatic diseases are in this category. More experts were called in at this point whose general opinion was a diagnosis of Ankylosing Spondylitis, where the connective tissue of the spine disintegrates. The specialists stated that there was no known treatment and that they had never seen anyone recover from this illness, they gave Cousins a 1 in 500 chance of survival. At this point other than keeping him comfortable there was nothing else they could do.

- **DIAGNOSIS:** ankylosing spondylitis, an autoimmune disease or AS.
- **SYMPTOMS** pain and stiffness in the spine, especially in the morning, reduced range of motion in the spine, fatigue, fever and eye inflammation
- **PROGNOSIS** 1 in 500 chances of survival
- **TREATMENT** Recommended treatment included painkillers and sleeping pills for comfort, aspirin and phenylbutazone to reduce inflammation.

Cousins realized that because of the serious nature of the diagnosis that he needed to become much more involved and start looking for options. He had always had an interest in medicine and with his work as a writer knew how to do research, so he began to look for answers. One of the doctors involved was an old friend of Cousins who knew of his interest in medicine and supported him throughout this process. The first step was a discussion about the possible origins of the disease when Dr. Hitzig suggested one of two theories, heavy-metal poisoning or the after affect of a streptococcal infection. This is when Cousins started piecing together the events of his trip.

Events That Triggered His Disease

Cousins believed that the toxic diesel and jet fuel were among the underlying cause of his disease combined with the fact the he was exhausted from the stress, lack of sleep

and a 10- hour flight. The only flaw in this theory was that his wife went with him and she wasn't ill. One possible reason for that could have been that he was allergic to those components he was exposed to while his wife was not. The second possible contributing factor was that he was experiencing Adrenal Burnout as a result of the many stressful problems during the trip. Adrenal burnout makes it difficult to tolerate a toxic experience as opposed to someone whose immunologic system was fully functional. After careful reflection as to what he experienced during his trip, **Adrenal Burnout** was starting to look like the end result of those compounded circumstances. He began his treatment research here.

RECOMMENDED TREATMENT FOR ADRENAL BURNOUT

- **NUTRITION:** a diet rich in essential nutrients including omega 3 fatty acids, amino acids, and essential vitamins can help restore the adrenal glands. Avoiding sugary foods and processed carbohydrates is crucial for stabilizing blood sugar levels and reducing stress on the adrenal glands. Herbal and nutritional supplements are also advised.
- **SLEEP HYGIENE:** prioritizing quality sleep is vital for adrenal recovery. Aim for at least 7-9 hours of sleep per night and establish a consistent bedtime routine to ensure a restful sleep. Sleep disturbances including insomnia and sleep apnea must be addressed for a full recovery.
- **STRESS MANAGEMENT:** managing sources of stress through mindfulness, meditation, or therapy is crucial in reducing the strain on your adrenal glands. Chronic stress leads to prolonged cortisol production which can worsen adrenal fatigue.
- **EXERCISE:** regular exercise like yoga walking or light weight training helps support adrenal recovery without overstressing the body.

HOSPITALS ARE NO PLACE FOR A PERSON TO BE SICK

As he considered various ways to support and heal his adrenal glands, he became aware of how his stay in the hospital has been counterproductive to the healing process. His hospital experience was described below.

- **SLEEP DISRUPTION** hospital routines take precedence over the rest requirements of the patient; Sleep is a therapeutic component of healing that hospitals don't seem to consider.
- **NUTRITION POORLY BALENCED MEALS** processed foods containing harmful dyes, white bread, or bleached flour. Vegetables are often over cooked with little no nutritional value. Very few offerings of fresh food. In essence food with little or no nutritional value. Cousins called his hospital food the equivalent of cardboard.

- **LACK OF BASIC SANITATION** considering the rapidity with which staphylococci and other pathogenic organisms can run through an entire hospital he felt the sanitary conditions were inadequate.
- **INDESCRIMINATE ADMINISTRATION** of tranquilizers and powerful painkillers. He felt many times drugs were administered for the benefit of staff over the therapeutic needs of the patient.

COUSINS PERSONAL TREATMENT PLAN

Cousins knew his body had been weakened from the stress, toxins and adrenal burnout which made it susceptible to infection. Those conditions needed to be addressed immediately. He also believed that the body could begin to repair itself if all toxins were removed. Here's what he decided with his doctors to do next.

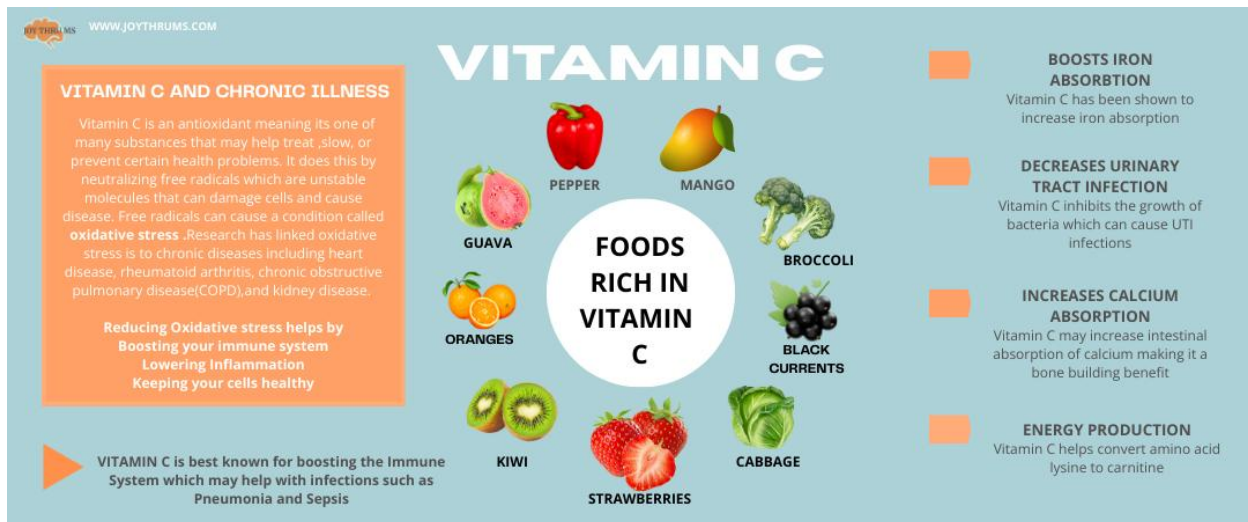
#1 LEAVE THE HOSPITAL and check into a hotel. He felt that in a hotel rather than home he could ensure a controlled environment in order to get the rest he needed, quiet for the sleep his body required, order in the plant-based food he needed and control his emotional space.

#2 REMOVE ALL TOXINS Cousins believed that the medications he was being given were Toxic. His research revealed the following; First the aspirin and phenylbutazone that his doctors had prescribed put a heavy strain on his **adrenal glands**, one of his biggest concerns. At the time Phenylbutazone was one of the most powerful drugs being manufactured with serious side-effects producing bloody stools, intolerable itching, sleeplessness, and depress bone marrow. Aspirin was a whole other issue being given out in unlimited quantities while also running the risk of serious side-effects. Most people today are unaware that aspirin even in small amounts can cause internal bleeding because it's been sold to us as harmless when it's anything but.

HIS CONCERNS:

PAIN Cousins knew the drugs were for the pain in his spine so the question was could he tolerate it with no medications. He decided against his doctor's orders not to take any pain medication they believed the pain would be unbearable. Cousins believed that the toxins in those medications would block his body's ability to heal itself and was worth being uncomfortable.

INFLAMMATION AND VITAMIN C He also no longer wanted to take aspirin but inflammation was another significant aspect of his recovery. His research led him to articles about ascorbic acid and its role in combating a wide number of illnesses including adrenal burnout and inflammation. This is when he made the decision to take high doses of vitamin C as a possible treatment for inflammation that was healthy.



FINAL STEP: Affirmative Emotions or Laughter

Cousins asked the question that if STRESS can cause Disease then what affect would the opposite have on the body? He firmly believed that changing our body chemistry was a key component in self- healing and that would require effort out of the norm. In addition to Faith, Hope and Love he added Humor as the vehicle to shift his chemistry. Cousins started with a series of funny tv shows and added old funny movies until he discovered that 10 minutes of “belly laughter” would give him at least 2 hours of pain free sleep. After settling into his Hotel Cousins continued to work in conjunction with his doctors daily to monitor his vitals for any adjustment needed in the dosage of Vitamin C, his sleep patterns and his pain level. By day 8 both the Doctors and Cousins started to see real improvement and hope that this was actually working, within several months he was able to return to work full time.

Norman Cousins conclusions about his recovery:

First: that our “will” to live is not a theoretical abstraction, but a physiologic reality with therapeutic characteristics.

Second: Cousin acknowledges how fortunate he was to have a friend and doctor who encouraged his will to live and to mobilize all the natural resources of mind and body to combat disease.

Third: Cousin’s friend, Dr Hitzig was willing to set aside his own beliefs in pharmaceuticals when he became convinced that his patient might have something better to offer.

Fourth: Cousins also respected the fact that Dr. Hertzig acknowledged the fact that the art of healing is based on the variability of diseases and the fact that there is still so much left to learn in regards to understanding the mechanisms of treatment and prevention.

Fifth: Cousins believed that the “Life Force” is still one of the most powerful energies on earth and the least understood.

You can find his book on Amazon “anatomy of an illness” by Norman Cousins