

# Living Your Best Life

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# Introduction

- ▶ Diagnosed in 1992, aged 22
  - ▶ Comorbidities
    - ▶ statistical association of two distinct diseases in the same individual at a rate higher than expected by chance
- ▶ Became chronic and daily over ten years ago
- ▶ Have tried over 80 treatments, including a nerve stimulator implant



# Introduction

- ▶ Have been participating in Miles for Migraine since 2013
- ▶ Have been participating in Headache on the Hill since 2015
- ▶ I struggle with living my best life every minute of every day
- ▶ “The one thing that we all have in common is that we’re all totally different” - Me



# Happiness

The Constitution only guarantees the American people the right to pursue happiness. You have to catch it for yourself.

- Benjamin Franklin



# Happiness

- ▶ “Happy” documentary – interviewed happy people
- ▶ Happiness research focuses beyond absence of illness, a life that flourishes with deep and genuine happiness
- ▶ 50% - determined by our genes - genetic set point
- ▶ 10% - circumstances - income, social status, where you live, age, **health**
- ▶ 40% - intentional behavior to become happier
- ▶ Family, friends, nature, flow
- ▶ People with intrinsic goals are happier - personal growth, relationships, community feeling



# Happiness

How Can I Worry  
About Any of That  
When I'm in Pain?



# Happiness

- ▶ 40% - intentional behavior to become happier
- ▶ Family, friends, nature, flow, smile
- ▶ Intrinsic goals - personal growth, relationships, community feeling
- ▶ We all need something bigger than ourselves to believe in
- ▶ I believe we can work on these goals even with health conditions



# Acceptance

- ▶ Doesn't mean what most people think it means
- ▶ It does NOT mean giving up
- ▶ It doesn't really mean Acceptance and Commitment Therapy either, but kinda
  - ▶ Type of psychotherapy that helps you accept the difficulties that come with life
  - ▶ Learn how to accept those things that are out of your control and commit to changing those things that can be changed to make your life better





# Acceptance

- ▶ What acceptance means to me
- ▶ Nerve stimulator surgery failure
- ▶ I no longer fight the idea that I have migraine disease
- ▶ No more – why me?
- ▶ Try not to obsess about migraine all the time
- ▶ Redirect that energy on other things



# Acceptance

- ▶ What Acceptance Means to Me
  - ▶ Focus energy on
    - ▶ 40% - intentional behavior to become happier
    - ▶ Family, friends, nature, flow
    - ▶ Intrinsic goals - personal growth, relationships, community feeling
    - ▶ We all need something bigger than ourselves to believe in
  - ▶ I am a person with migraine disease
  - ▶ What can I do?
    - ▶ Work, friends, family
    - ▶ Living more in the moment



# Acceptance

- ▶ What Do I Try to Focus on Now?
- ▶ Better relationships with doctors
  - ▶ Migraine Profile
- ▶ Researching treatments
- ▶ Advocating for the migraine community
- ▶ Realistic goals – career, social life
- ▶ Feeling like my diseases are managed much better
- ▶ Acceptance is a journey, not a destination



# Observing Thoughts

- ▶ Would you talk to your best friend in the same way you talk to yourself?
- ▶ Things don't change, but your thoughts about them do
- ▶ Is it really true that you are worthless, because you spend a lot of time on the couch?
- ▶ We can't change that we have migraine disease until there is a cure
- ▶ But we can change how we think about it and ourselves



# Observing Thoughts

- ▶ The Work

- ▶ When she believed her thoughts, she suffered, and when she didn't believe her thoughts she didn't suffer.
- ▶ What had been causing her depression was not the world around her, but what she believed about the world around her.
- ▶ “When you argue with reality, you lose—but only 100% of the time.”
- ▶ “Reality is always kinder than the story we are believing about it.”



# Observing Thoughts

- ▶ Leaves on a Stream
  - ▶ Bring your focus to your breath
  - ▶ Start to notice the thoughts that come into your mind
  - ▶ Imagine putting those words onto a leaf as it floats by on a stream
  - ▶ Watch it drift on by
  - ▶ Your mind will wander, and that's ok



# And Just For Fun....

“The problem is not the problem.

The problem is your attitude about the problem.”

— Captain Jack Sparrow

