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