

Polio Perspective
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Bonding and Bullie *by Kathy Fezza Galletly*

After getting polio in October in 1954, I spent years in physical therapy as an outpatient twice a week with other polio kids. We didn't bond; we just knew each others' names. Polio was an ugly memory that everyone wanted to forget.

I did have a strong bond at home. My brother was six years older and intellectually disabled. He would buckle my shoes, I would help him read. We were the kids the bullies picked on, so we learned to stick together. My brace became a weapon. When a bully would try hit Jeff, I'd get between him and the punch. The bully would scream out in pain after slamming his fist into my arm of steel.

Not all the bullies were strangers or neighborhood kids; some were my own family. Not all bullies used their fists, either. It took me a long time to understand that. I had a cousin who was my playmate until I had polio. She was athletic. She loved to climb trees and roller skate. I wanted to be a ballerina. When I first came home from the hospital, I had to stay in bed. One afternoon my cousin came to visit wearing a pink tutu and danced around the room telling me that she could dance and I couldn't and all the presents I received when I came home from the hospital couldn't change that.

I remember giving her one of my presents, thinking this would make her want to stay and play with me. She took the toy and left. In her 20's she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis when I heard the news, I thought, "This is it, she's disabled, we'll BOND" One day she visited and I asked if there was anything I could do for her, she said, "When we were kids and you had polio people gave you presents. I have MS and no one has given me any presents!" I then gave her one of my plants that she admired, she took the plant and left. My first thought was Hmmm, maybe this bonding thing was not going to happen.

After I lost my brother I felt my bond was gone. Sure I had friends, but none of them were disabled. And it wasn't that they didn't like me. I was very popular. I took them where they had to go, listened to their sad stories. Whenever they needed me, I was there, I didn't argue, was always one of those happy people, the life of the party, the good will ambassador. I always seemed to find people who needed me to take care of them.

Then came post-polio by this time my marriage was falling apart. I was a physical and emotional mess. "Friends" started to fall by the wayside. Talk about unbonding! Some of them left so abruptly I can still feel the wind. When I started to go to post polio support groups, I saw other people with braces, crutches, scooters and wheelchairs. My own

kind, all gathered in a room. Let the bonding begin! After the first two weeks I made my first and lasting bond, with Ellen. We talked about hospitals, being quarantined, physical therapy and how afraid of this post-polio thing we were. We became polio buddies. This made me brave enough to be president of a support group. We'd all be one big happy family.

Well, it didn't happen quite the way I thought. Politics, different personalities, jealousy, and arguments. This made me nuts. Then I realized something very important: Bonding doesn't mean you have to be physically the same. It means trusting someone else with your feelings good or bad, weak or strong. It means sharing common feelings. Disabled people do not have to bond or even like each other, but we have to stick together. The bullies are still out there. Some want to take our healthcare away, and some try to take our dignity. We have to let them know our wheels are greased and ready to roll. As one we can strive to make our lives the best we know how. And hopefully, along the way we'll find someone to bond with-and the road will be a lot easier to roll.

Humor Heals *by Millie Malone Lill*

One day a farmer's donkey fell into an abandoned well. The animal cried piteously for hours as the farmer tried to figure out what to do. Finally, he decided the animal was old and the well needed to be covered up anyway, so it just wasn't worth it to him to try to retrieve the donkey. He invited all his neighbors to come over and help him. They each grabbed a shovel and began to shovel dirt into the well. Realizing what was happening; the donkey at first cried and wailed horribly. Then, a few shovels full later, he quieted down completely. The farmer peered down into the well, and was astounded by what he saw. With every shovel full of dirt that hit his back, the donkey was doing something amazing. He would shake it off and take a step up on the new layer of dirt. As the farmer's neighbors continued to shovel dirt on top of the animal, he would shake it off and take a step up. Pretty soon, the donkey stepped up over the edge of the well and trotted off, to the shock and astonishment of all the neighbors! Life is going to shovel dirt on you, all kinds of dirt. The trick to getting out of the well is to not let it bury you, but to shake it off and take a step up. Each of our troubles is a stepping-stone. We can get out of the deepest wells just by not stopping, never giving up! Shake it off and take a step up! Remember the five simple rules to be happy: Free your heart from hatred. Free your mind from worries. Live simply. Give more. Expect less. Also, the donkey kicked the crap out of the guy that tried to bury him. Which brings me to another moral for this story: When you try to cover your ass, it will always come back and get you in the end.

Attitude is everything. None of us has any control over what happens to us, but each of us does have control over our reaction to circumstances. We decide, every day, if we are going to be happy or unhappy. As Shakespeare said, "Nothing is either good or bad, but thinking makes it so."

Laughter and playfulness are natural things. All animals play. You probably think that cows would not be playful. I'm sure some of you have seen calves running and jumping in the fields in the spring, but I once saw a full grown cow playing a game. It was one of our purebred Angus heifers, on a morning after an ice storm. The cottonwood trees that line the pasture lane were covered in ice. The heifer stretched her neck up, grasped an ice covered branch with her teeth and jerked it. A shower of ice

crystals came down on her head. I swear she grinned. She then went all around the tree, grasping each of the drooping branches and making them shed their ice coating.

Scientists performed an experiment with rats to see what the effect of laughter has on them. The test group was left alone to live their little rat lives undisturbed by the men in the lab coats. The other group was tickled on a daily basis. According to the report, the group of rats that was tickled daily actually laughed and showed pleasure. But more importantly, they grew larger and tested better in the Mensa for Rats program. Now, I have no idea why one would want larger, smarter rats, and I would like to say to those scientists...have you nothing better to do than go around tickling rats?

Laughter releases endorphins in our brains. That is a natural pain killer. Laughter is also good exercise. A good belly laugh burns calories and is like jogging for our insides. It is said that adults laugh an average of 15 times a day, while children laugh upwards of 60 times a day. We could all take a page from a child's book. Children don't suffer from pain unless it is present right here, right now. We adults tend to anticipate pain as well as remember it, which makes our pain last three times as long. Children hurt when they hurt, but once the pain is over, it's over and life goes on.

5 THINGS LAUGHTER WILL DO FOR YOU

- Improve immune functions
- Vibrating muscles give internal massage
- Good cardio-vascular effects
- Relieves stress, discharges physical and emotional tension
- People who laugh together work together better

5 THINGS HUMOR WILL DO FOR YOU

- Releases negative emotions such as anger & guilt
- Improves enthusiasm for work
- Reduces inhibitions & increases self-confidence
- Humorous people face life's problems better
- Sense of humor is the #1 romantically attractive trait

Dr. Kataria started laughter clubs in India and Steve Wilson from the US met him and has started laughter clubs all over North America. Laughter clubs do not rely on jokes or humor, but are a form of exercise along the lines of yoga. Participants simulate laughter, which occasionally turns into genuine laughter. It is felt that jokes may offend or a person may not "get" the humor, but a genuine fake laugh is available to all

I am not saying that you should toss your pain meds away. That would be foolish in the extreme. What I am suggesting is that you supplement your pain medication with some techniques that will make them more effective.

First of all...GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION TO FEEL JOY. We, as adults, sometimes forget to play. Every morning, when you wake up, instead of cataloguing all the body parts that have gone on strike, how about spending a moment thinking of something that makes you smile. My little dog Fiona's first thing in the morning antics always make me smile. Hard not to when there is a pointy little nose whuffing in your ear.

LOOK ON THE POSITIVE SIDE. Everybody every day faces frustrating issues, but if you can look at the funny side of the situation, you are ahead of the game. You have the choice, every day, of being

happy or being sad. When the situation calls for sadness, go ahead and cry. When my marriage hit the rocks, and I left my friends in Hyas, I thought of the blessings of that marriage. Not the marriage itself so much, although the wedding was the funniest and best I've ever attended. I gained a mother-in-law who became a very close friend and a sister in law who is still one of my favorite people. Enna's sense of humor always makes me laugh.

CULTIVATE YOUR SENSE OF THE RIDICULOUS. Think about it...so much of life is ridiculous. On one of my trips with Carolann, we came out of our motel room to see a couple of women walking their dogs. Since the one dog had leaped into my arms on his way past, we began a conversation. "My" dog's owner had her arm in a sling, so I asked her what had happened. "Sky diving accident," she told me. At the look on my face, she broke into a big grin. "Not really. I fell in my kitchen and broke my arm, but it sounds so much more exciting to tell people I broke it sky diving. Sometimes I say I broke it while skiing and sometimes I say I'm a professional kick boxer." I liked her attitude.

PUT THE PAIN IN PROPORTION. I fell in '91 and got a spiral fracture in my "bad" leg, which was painful and very slow in healing. At one point, I also got laryngitis. My granddaughter Jessie was about 4 or 5 at that time. She climbed up on my lap and put her arms around my neck. "Did you break your throat, too, Gran?" she asked. "Yes, Gran has a broken leg and a broken throat. Might as well throw out this old gran and get a new one." She put her little hands on both sides of my face and looked me in the eye. "Oh no, Gran," she said. "There's such a lot left!" Well, of course, what was I thinking? I had such a lot left. There is nothing like a big jelly kiss to cure your aches and pains.

THINK LIKE A KID. Kids only hurt when they hurt. They don't anticipate pain, nor do they dwell on it when it is gone. I have seen children in burn units with no noses or eyebrows or lashes, awaiting skin grafts. Are they worried? Do they think about how bad the grafts will hurt or think about the pain they endured when they got burned? No. Not really. They are busy living their lives, learning new things, running around being kids. I'm not saying they don't feel pain, just that they don't spend precious time hurting when they don't hurt.

STOCK UP ON STUFF FOR THE BAD DAYS. We all have bad pain days. I personally cannot take pain medication because it knocks me out. I avoid pain meds for that reason. Normally, I don't have a lot of pain. I'm more of a carrier...I don't *have* pain, I *give* pain. Sometimes, though, the fibro kicks in and I'm for a day of suffering. Pain medication has little effect on my fibro anyhow, so I usually get out the heating pad, head for the recliner and endure. I watch a funny movie, read a funny book, or listen to soothing music, depending on the degree of pain. You can't hurt and laugh at the same time, so I like to have a Dave Barry book handy for such occasions.

Movies I recommend:

When you are in pain, you don't want a movie that makes you think too hard. This is a time to watch something plotless and simple. So:

Any of the Jackie Chan movies like Rush Hour, Rush Hour 2, Shanghai Noon.

Old Cary Grant movies...such an elegant and funny man.

Some people like the Three Stooges. I don't, I find them annoying, but if you do...good!

McClintock, with John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara...especially the mudslide scene.

Romancing the Stone, with Kathleen Turner and Michael Douglas, especially the mudslide scene.

Hanky Panky with Gilda Radner and Gene Wilder

Abbot and Costello

Shrek, which is wasted on the young

Zorro the Gay Blade

Mel Brooks' Blazing Saddles, Space Balls, A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum

Any movie with Burt Reynolds and Dom DeLuise

Some of the Monty Python movies

House Calls with Walter Matthau

Whoopie Goldberg movies

Dudley Moore movies, like Wholly Moses, Arthur, Romantic Comedy

My Fellow Americans, with Jack Lemmon and James Garner

TV shows: You can find cable channels that run old sitcoms like:

McHale's Navy

Hogan's Heroes

Leave it to Beaver

Bill Cosby Show

and some of the series like

Diagnosis Murder

Matlock

The Smothers Brothers

Your Show of Shows

Keeping Up Appearances

Vicar of Dibley

Fawlty Towers

Benny Hill

Waiting for God

Big Bang Theory

Authors:

Dave Barry

Mark Twain

Stephen Leacock

Lewis Grizzard

Tom Odette

Robert Ludlow's Road to Gondolfo and Road to Omaha

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Web Corner

New Haven's Hillhouse High School Class of 1943 never had a prom because of World War II. But finally, after a 70-year wait, classmates gathered to celebrate and remember. Our own Linda Wheeler Donahue went to this prom as a date of one of the members of the class.

<http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=50147223n>

London Through the Eyes of Disabled People

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=ZTulAezmBjE

Disability and Discrimination at your Doctor's Office

<http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/05/23/disability-and-discrimination-at-the-doctors-office/?emc=tnt&tntemail0=y>

Middle School Students Taught Awareness of Disability

<http://www.wickedlocal.com/milford/news/x90719183/Milford-middle-school-students-taught-awareness-understanding-of-people-with-disabilities#axzz2U87c21VD>

Polio Returns to the Horn of Africa

<https://www.facebook.com/richard.bruno.98/posts/575636509133662>

Rotary Honors Polio Survivors

<http://www.courant.com/community/cheshire/hcrs-75102hc-statewide-20130515,0,3682673.story>

Why You Should Worry About a Case of Polio in Somalia

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=polio-somalia-eradication>

An article by Gary Presley on devotees

<http://www.garypresley.com/2013/05/and-so-what-do-you-think.html>

Post-polio Healthcare Considerations For Family and Friends

<http://www.post-polio.org/edu/healthcare/pt1hospital.html#onecon>

How to get paid as a family care-giver

<http://www.seniorcarehomes.com/caregiving/how-to-get-paid-as-a-family-caregiver.html>

A Little Bit of Humor

One evening, a college professor had some idle time on his hands. All the papers had been graded, the next week's lectures prepared, and it was still 3 hours until bedtime. As he was a computing instructor, the professor was also well-versed in locations of game rooms online. That is where he went to help pass time. Now this professor happened to be a very good chess player. He had not been beaten by any of his friends in several years, so he felt confident as he entered an online chess room. Since there were an odd number of people there, he had to wait a few minutes until the next person to come into the room. Within very few minutes, a new player, whose screen name was "still_learning", showed up. He introduced himself only as "John" and so the professor reciprocated and said he was Brad. Well, "still_learning" may have been still learning, but he was well along that path. He defeated the professor in six straight games, even achieving checkmate in less than 10 moves one game! Fascinated, the professor asked John how old he was. "I turned thirteen last month. How old are you?" replied John. Feeling totally humiliated, and thinking quickly, the professor typed in, "I'll be eleven next Tuesday!"