



# *Healing Naturally*

My Story

Jaime A. Heidel

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This work is a personal essay based on one person's individual experience. Always consult your healthcare practitioner before embarking on any new healthcare regimen.

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For the first twenty-two years of my life, I was sick. I suffered from chronic sinusitis, diarrhea, stomachaches, brain fog, fatigue, muscle aches, anxiety, mood swings and many more seemingly unrelated symptoms. I was not like other children my age. I had no energy, poor coordination, and was easily confused. Though I was taken to many doctors and subjected to a myriad of tests, nobody could figure out what was wrong with me. Eventually, the conclusion was “it’s all in her head”.

In 2002, at the age of twenty-two, my health problems abruptly worsened. I lost weight rapidly from my already slender 5’3”, 120 lb frame. My bowel movements were liquid. My hair fell out. My naturally pale skin jaundiced. I got a case of the chills that wouldn’t go away and could barely get out of bed.

I thought I was dying. Instead of calling my primary care doctor, who I knew had already exhausted her efforts to diagnose me, I scheduled an appointment with a naturopath who spent over an hour learning my entire history, not just medical but emotional and psychological. He also sent me for a complete blood workup. While we waited for the results, he suggested something that surprised me. He prescribed an elimination diet, telling me to eat nothing but rice and vegetables for two weeks. Then, I was to slowly reintroduce foods to see what I reacted to. He was positive I had one or multiple food sensitivities causing most of my symptoms.

The process was a bit grueling as my body began to detoxify from all of the processed, refined foods I was used to eating. My mood swings went from bad to worse for those two weeks but the trade-off was worth it. Within days, I experienced immediate relief. The pain that was so much a part of me began to fade. I had full days with no stomach pain and marveled at how the lack of it took some getting used to. I began reintroducing foods and eliminated those I reacted to.

I discovered I had a wheat/gluten intolerance known as **celiac disease**; an autoimmune disorder of the small intestine whereby the protein found in wheat/rye, barely and oats (called gluten) causes inflammation in the small intestine that interferes with the body's ability to digest food and absorb nutrients. Like others with this disease, I also found I had a few other food intolerances such as corn syrup and the antibiotics in meat.

My blood test results showed something as well. My platelet count was unusually low. I was sent to a blood doctor for a consult and was diagnosed with thrombocytopenia, a mild form of ITP. **ITP** is an autoimmune disorder, wherein the body attacks healthy platelets for no know reason. The symptoms range from no symptoms at all to intestinal bleeding and death. I was one of the lucky ones with a borderline platelet count of 75,000 to 130,000. (A normal, healthy adult will have a platelet count of 150,000 to 400,000.) My symptoms were easy bruising and fatigue.

Finding out I had not one but two autoimmune disorders prompted me to do some of my own research.

The most common connection between all autoimmune diseases is that the cause is unknown. Theories abound that the cause is anything from trauma to the influx of foreign chemicals invading our bodies every day but nobody knows for sure.

My past eight years of research have turned up something vital. Treating an autoimmune disease by trying to “cure” it doesn’t work. Though it may mask the symptoms, it doesn’t address the underlying problem.

I have found that the best course of action is to heal and nourish the body and mind, making optimal immune system performance possible where it wasn’t before. That way, the body can do what it is designed to do; heal itself.

Please note I am not a doctor or licensed healthcare practitioner. But I know what has worked for me. You can find all of this information on the Internet, on forums and in books. I wanted to include my own personal story along with the methods I’ve used so people could find them all in one place.

In addition to my required gluten free diet, I also **avoid all processed foods**. The chemicals and additives used in this type of food are indigestible to even those with a healthy digestive system and cause low-grade inflammation in the body. The inflammation you may not notice now can lead to more serious illness down the line.

**Stay away from anything with the artificial sweetener, aspartame.** If you follow no other advice given in this brief article, follow this. Research the symptoms of aspartame poisoning. Are some or all of your symptoms related?

I drink caffeine free green tea with a slice of lemon each day. Green tea has very powerful antioxidant properties, which the lemon helps your body to absorb. I eat wild caught fish instead of farm raised and only eat organic poultry and eggs as the antibiotics fed to animals wreck havoc on the body.

**I do not use a microwave.** Microwaves not only sap the taste from food but the radiation changes the energy content of your food making it far less nutritious and more difficult for your body to absorb needed nutrients. Avoid cooking your food this way. I noticed an increase in my energy level almost immediately when I reheated my food using my small toaster oven.

I also use milled flax seed, a powerful anti-inflammatory in yogurt and on salads.

I have benefited from the use of digestive aids and recommend trying them if you suffer from indigestion, constipation or any other digestive malady. They've also been linked to the prevention of inflammation.

Also, if you aren't having a bowel movement at least twice a day you're constipated. I know it's unacceptable to talk of such things in polite society, but we should. Psyllium fiber, apple pectin, Probiotics and prunes are all different and effective ways of correcting this problem. Obviously, don't use all of these at once. Try each and see which works best for you. Also, drinking plenty of water every day is essential. If your digestive system is working properly, the rest of your body will follow suit.

Epsom salt baths do more than relax aching muscles. They help to detoxify the body as well. If you are diabetic or have trouble tolerating heat, avoid hot baths.

Sleep is seriously underrated. You should get 7-8 hours of deep, uninterrupted sleep a night in order for your body to function optimally.

**If you smoke, quit.** Enough said. Drink alcohol in moderation

If you're overweight, take healthy steps to lose it. Simply eliminating processed foods and getting your digestive system back on track will help in this goal. Begin an exercise routine that is a good fit for you. I've been practicing yoga for over ten years and love the feeling of strength and balance it gives me.

Back in 2007, I had **melanoma**, the most serious form out of the three types of skin cancer. I was lucky that I only needed surgery and was cured. It never spread. I am very fair-skinned and not a sunbather. Since then, I've been using only natural skincare.

Take a look at your beauty products. Many of the common products you use on your skin, teeth and hair every day have harmful chemical additives that are being absorbed into your blood stream. Your immune system has to work that much harder each day to eliminate these toxins. Some build up in your body for years causing serious health problems. If you have unexplained symptoms now, it could very well be the lotion or make-up you're using. Replace these products with natural alternatives.

I prefer products made by Burt's Bees. For natural make-up, I use [www.suncatnaturalmineralmakeup.com](http://www.suncatnaturalmineralmakeup.com) and the products I find on [www.allnaturalcosmetics.com](http://www.allnaturalcosmetics.com). Choose what works best for you.



I recommend finding a homeopathic/holistic physician in your area to compliment the care you are receiving from your medical doctor. Homeopathy is powerful medicine that works. Do your own research on homeopathy and find a physician near you. You may be able to find natural alternatives to prescription and OTC medications that will provide the same result without side effects. You'll be glad you did yourself this favor.

Also, look into **Reiki**, a powerful form of energy healing. Reiki is not magic and it has no religious affiliations. It can only heal and be of benefit.

If you've never heard of the **Law of Attraction**, now is your time to be introduced. Watching 'The Secret' helped me to understand and put into practice the true power of positive thinking.

The mind is an incredibly powerful tool into which we have only begun to tap.

I am legally bound to include this sentence:

*I am not a doctor or licensed healthcare practitioner and if you wish to try any of these methods, you are trying them at your own risk.*

Now that I've said that, let me say this, I have complete faith in natural methods especially when dealing with autoimmune disease. They've worked for me and countless others. If you're experiencing chronic pain, making some or all of these minor changes may seem too easy a solution. But think of it this way; what have you to lose?

Try a few things. Do your own research. Find a holistic practitioner in your area. There's light at the end of the tunnel. If I found it, so can you.