

Katy Byrne, MFT, psychotherapist in Sonoma, CA, wants to know: What's Up with That? *She's the author of Hairball Diaries: The Courage to Speak Up.*

Healthcare Hairball

Doctors aren't God and intuition sometimes goes just so far. How does healing occur? There are lots of opinions: vitamins, exercise, herbs, sex, yoga or being Italian!

So, why write another article about healthcare? Does anybody really care?

Let's face it, marathon runners can die early and happy people not recover, some drink booze or smoke cigarettes and live to 98. What's up with that?

When I look back on my life, sudden cures made me cynically roll my eyes! Some things work, some don't. We all die someday, but wellness is preferred. Looking back, there have been some unexpected cures.

I remember when a dentist, solemnly looking down at me, sighed, "You need braces." I imagined life with tinsel shining through. I ran to Mom, chin on the ground. She grumbled, "put your fingers on each side of your teeth -and squeeze everyday."

A year later, no gap—voila!

There's something great about avoiding years of hell using Mom's Home Healthcare. But, thank God for morphine, 12 step groups, and surgery, but persistence is key !

Healthcare is a helluva challenge, from wrong diagnoses to paying for them. And the hell care stories I hear are harrowing. Like a friend with a diagnosis of "ulcer," that turned out to be tooth decay years later while hanging by his fingernails paying for Kaiser but praying for health, while paying.

Once, I had horrible back pain. The doc pointed, to my x-ray," "I haven't seen anything like this." I whispered, "What is it?" "Wide eyed, he stared, "I dunno, stay on your back." Then, a friend gave me an article by Dr.Sarno. I read it, thinking , "Oh Gawd, *New Age* affirmations and then I'm hunky dory," I thought. The next day, I was walking! He relieved my fears.

Doctors scared me to death while others got me on my feet. What's UP with that?

I remember trying to quit cigarettes. Then, the gal working next to me stopped smoking. She gloated about how great she felt ! That did it! So, I got a rhinestone pipe, filled it with cherry tobacco! I got the attention I needed and dropped the cigarettes! ...Once I knew I smoked to get attention, the shift happened!

Sometimes understanding the real problem leads to solutions. At other times, you try and fail. Whether hypnotherapy, astrology or God—the key to healing seems to be persistence and openness.

When I was twenty-one I went to a doctor for a physical. He looked at me through his bifocals, over my body, stuttering, "You will never be able to have sex." I looked back at him, bug-eyed, "What's up with that?" Solemnly, he said , "You have a double hymen, without major surgery, intercourse will be impossible."

I ran home sobbing, of course, to mom. I couldn't imagine the pain "down there." Mind you, Mother was an intelligent woman who owned a bookstore, but her tough side showed up under stress. She nodded impatiently, "Don't worry—get a sailor!"

I, being literal, ran straight to my friend Joe. He was in the navy. I sobbed, "Ya gotta help me." No problem! That was the end of my need for surgery. Sure can't think of a better way to save several thousand bucks! (Not that I recommend this.)

But, sometimes "getting out the hairball" helps. Being a psychotherapist, I can't write about clients; but I've seen miracles and resistance. One woman spent years angry with men—she didn't want intimacy. I tried many approaches. Getting out her darkest thoughts in safety surprised me. She has since met a man she loves and has been happily married for fifteen years.

What have I learned in all this? Change can come from a stranger, your mother, an ad on TV, writing in your diary, a friend, a shrink, risking new behavior, identifying the real problem or faith. Assistance can be on its way through a book, physician, email, God or the mailman.

Honor doctors, but also, think outside the healthcare box!

Reach Katy Byrne at www.katybyrne.com