

Claudy Pierce

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Thirteen years ago, I was diagnosed with CFIDS (Chronic Fatigue & Immune Dysfunction Syndrome) & Fibro-Myalgia, a condition for which there is no cure. Symptoms are: overwhelming fatigue, mental confusion, unrelenting pain throughout the body, in my case the latter was compounded by the onset of arthritis.

The most basic routines of daily life were unsurmountable tasks. I became malnourished having difficulties going to the store. I also developed asthma, an allergy to dust, not having enough strength to clean my room. Depression set in, self-denigration, telling myself that I was lazy, yet unable to overcome the lassitude. Not sleeping, just laying there, thoughts wrapped in a fog, wondering why I was still breathing. This illness became so debilitating that, unable to work and support myself I ended up selling all my possessions, eventually became homeless and barely survived on welfare. From an A personality type, loving to cook, designing clothes, I turned into an ill-tempered recluse, lost most of my friends, too tired to socialize or even talk on the telephone.

I was willing to try anything and I did: SSRI antidepressants without result. Then I tried Oxycontin and my life changed. I had energy again, could think clearly, with return of some appetite. Most of the pain retreated. I could houseclean again, started gardening, making bread. Improved diet, cleanliness as well as the exercise required cleared my lungs. As the dark clouds of depression dispersed I stopped taking antidepressants.

I, however am not deluded into a pollyanesque vision that all my troubles are over. I am aware that oxycontin is a controlled substance with addictive properties and that higher tolerance will set in. I am also aware that it is a palliative masking symptoms of a debilitating disease for which there is no cure. But between the life of a slug which would have landed me eventually in a hospital and being able to take care of myself and helping my roommate who is handicapped, the choice is obvious. I'm grateful that someone invented that drug, that I was made aware of it and had the opportunity to take it, reducing my intake of other medications which were expensive and could compromise the liver. I am not feeling totally useless anymore. Above all I hope no one has to live in such misery when there is help available. I was lucky to have a doctor who understood, cared and was willing to try new therapies.

Sincerely,
Claudy Pierce