Nine Summer Resolutions for Lupus Warriors

by BARBARA LEECH

Barbara’s Commitment to Her Resolutions for Lupus

Many people make New Year’s resolutions, but I have decided to make this summer my “turning point.” I have been in a period of calm, meaning my lupus seems to be under some level of control, my organs are doing well again and my hair has stopped falling out.

I still battle debilitating fatigue on some days, but it is not every day as it once was. I am afraid to say the word “remission” out loud, but I think about it daily, hopeful with the possibility that peace might be mine for a little while.

Naturally I feel inspired to really do all I can to turn this corner. I have asked my rheumatologist, my endocrinologist, and cardiologist, who are all wonderful specialists, but who often lack solid answers. This time was no different. I got responses like, “Keep doing what you’re doing,” and, “Exercise more, but don’t overdo it.”

So, I have researched on my own and looked back at the journals I have kept along this treacherous lupus journey, and I have compiled a summer resolution list. My hope is that it inspires remission of this disease that has kicked my butt for the last several years. I have had remissions before and I have to believe that one will come again — maybe this summer.

Who’s With Me?

I am sharing my plan not because I am certain it will bring about a remission, but because I am hopeful if will set the best course for one to come along, for me and for you. Faith and hope are beautiful things and it is my hope that you will try to create a promise to yourself this summer too.

It is so easy to make choices that aren’t the best for our health, from drinking soda or too much alcohol (it is margarita season isn’t it?) to eating fast food. If you’re willing to commit with me this summer, compile a list of your own (or steal from mine), but whatever you do try to put your health first.

Commit to be fit, or fitter than you are right now (mentally, spiritually and physically), and at the very least, you may have fewer bad flare days and be in a better position to fight your battle with the dreaded wolf.

My Resolution List

From looking at my journals from healthier periods in my life, and talking to my doctors and a friend who is a nutritionist, I have found several things I have decided to commit to this summer:

I Will Avoid Processed Food

That's right, only turkey dogs, sandwich meat and bacon that are nitrate free will pass my lips. I will avoid regular chips and all those fun snacks at family gatherings and focus on the fruit and veggie platter.

I Will Limit My Gluten Intake

While I am not gluten intolerant (according to tests), I have read that limiting it as much as possible can make a difference in someone with an autoimmune disease. I have also read that it does nothing unless you eliminate it entirely, but I am too weak to commit fully to a no gluten diet just yet.

I Will Stop Blaming Myself for Bad Days

Even though I have been feeling better for the last couple of months, I still have days where the wolf comes knocking on my door. I am gripped with fear on those days because sometimes the wolf stays and I fear each time that the bad day will turn into a bad month and an expensive visit to the ER. You just never know.

I often allow that fear to get me into what I call the "blame myself mode." I think about what I did to trigger it and I beat myself up for having lupus all over again. No more. That does nothing but make me feel worse and I refuse to let that happen this summer.

Next Page: 6 More Summer Resolutions

I Will Stop Envy, Anger and Jealously

I am embarrassed to admit that this is a big one for me. Even though I know it is wrong, it still sneaks up on me. Many people in my life are so happy and healthy… which is great, but it all plays out in front of me while I fight for normalcy.

I am actually fine with my position until someone attributes having an illness to "karma" or to my "manifesting" it with negative thoughts. They politely assign blame to me for having developed lupus. I feel hurt, angry, and jealous of their good fortune. I hate that about myself, but it happens. It can eat me alive and is definitely not good for me physically, mentally or spiritually.

No more. If I am confronted by these hurtful accusations, I will brush it off as the insensitive rubbish it is. I will not point out that hurting me in this way should actually impact someone "karma" in a very bad way for being so cruel.

I Will Remember to Take My Medications

My memory is horrible and in the past I have missed doses of medications several days in a row. I will organize my meds so I cannot help but remember to take them. I will set an alarm on my phone as backup.

I Will Get Regular Gentle Exercise

I have been better about this lately, probably because I have felt better so exercising is possible. I will keep up this momentum and get at least a little each day (walking, with a goal of one mile), expanding on it when I can.

I Will Avoid the Sun

I once loved sitting in the sunshine so much, but with lupus it will trigger either a rash or a flare where I feel physically ill, weak, dizzy and lost in a fog of unclear thinking. As tempted as I am to cheat a bit and sit in the sun, get a tan and absorb some natural vitamin D, I will listen to my body and avoid too much exposure to UV rays.

I Will Eat My Veggies

During periods in my life where the wolf was calm, I was eating a ton of vegetables each day. I promise to eat more this summer and visit the local farmers' market for the freshest produce I can find. My plate will be 75 percent veggies and 25 percent protein.

I Will Rest

I am horrible at resting. I struggle to sleep each night and because of work and kids, I never nap. I promise myself I will listen to my fatigue, say no to some activities when I am feeling exhausted, and maybe even nap once per week.

I think deep down we all know what we could be doing better, what we could be letting go of and what we could be putting into our bodies that we are not, to improve how we feel and maybe calm the wolf. I hope you find ways to commit to yourself to choose wisely this summer and show lupus how strong you can be.