

COPD Will NOT Control Me!

by Trudy den Hoed

Voracious viruses smell my weakness from miles away, eager to invade my airways. The winter air narrows my bronchial tubes and allies with the bugs, giving them cozy habitation. My cough relentlessly resists the enemy but only manages to further inflame my airways, and the bugs snuggle in with a grin. My body warns me I should start antibiotics, but I ignore it. I hate it when the good bacteria is also destroyed, so I stall for time. Maybe if I keep pushing myself to walk, I'll hack those bugs out of my system. And downhill I go again. Back to square one...

As I write this, I'm having a tough time getting up another hill. I'm on a 12-day round of Prednisone with all its negative side effects, but I know sometimes it's the lesser of two evils. A roller coaster of insecurities swallows me up and shreds my trust in my God-given power to choose my attitude. *I'm so weary. Why bother? It's no use, I'll never be able to beat this thing anyway...*

Wait! Remember the little engine that could? *Puff! Puff! I think I can! I think I can!* Yes, I WILL again conquer this hill! My life does NOT have to be a steady road to final defeat. It CAN be a string of small victories. I have choices.

Shall I give myself a pity party, or shall I try to find support among those who are discouraged with me? Shall I mope when I can't do everything with or for my kids and grandkids that I'd like to, or shall I be thankful that there are still so many other ways to show them how much I love them? Shall I stay angry at God for not taking this illness away and fret about why I even have this when I never smoked in my life, or should I accept him as the Wise Designer



and trust Him that He'll produce an endlessly glorious picture out of this tangled mess? Shall I hibernate in despair over what the future may bring, or shall I live in the sunshine of blessings I have today?

Proactive choices, preventative measures, positive attitude. I will again build up my walking endurance, concentrating on correct breathing techniques. I will eat more nutritious meals and snacks. I will listen to my body signals and not wait too long to take antibiotics. (Why I never learn, I don't know.) I will learn to pace myself and make the most of what I still can do. I will allow needed rest and relaxation. I will make responsible, yet realistic choices! I can and will control my COPD (chronic bronchitis and some asthma); COPD will NOT control me!

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**I dedicate this article to my God Who still offers hope and in Whom all things are possible; to my loving husband, children, and grandchildren who give endless support; and to June and Darcy (pulmonary rehab therapists at Sioux Valley Rehab in Sioux Falls, SD), who love their jobs, care so much, and have taught me to rise and conquer.*