

The Kibo Project- A Testimony of Hope- By Art Norquist

This is a story of hope. It started with a moment or event that I can't even remember or retell, but somehow, the pain was the result, and its roots grabbed ahold of me, and the struggle began. Soon, discouragement set in, and despair was the result. But, through the providence of God, this story ends with limitless possibilities, a host of new beginnings... and hope.

I have never told my story; I never wanted to sound weak. I knew people truly wouldn't understand, and I could never admit to my pain. Admitting my pain would allow it a chance to defeat me, and that was unacceptable. I wanted to hide from the truth and shelter people from my pain, but more so, shelter myself from how I thought people would treat me. I always wanted to be treated as if nothing was wrong as if nothing was different.

I have been a headache/migraine sufferer for as long as I can remember; every day of my life I have had a headache. I can remember at a very early age of about 5 or younger, getting out of bed crying because my head hurt so bad. Not wanting to wake my parents and bother them, I sat in the living room on the couch, just hoping the pain would leave. Fatigue must have eventually won against the pain. Getting older, I would take aspirin for the pain. As my tolerance for it got higher, taking more was the solution, although this solution was not very effective. By high school, it wasn't unusual for me to take 10/12 aspirin at a time. If my pain was bad, then even more. At one point I reached 22 at once. I was sent to the nurse's office, and this was the first time I had to tell my dad about my headaches. I still never told anyone else. The pain was so hard to deal with at times and there were no solutions. In those deepest, most difficult moments, I honestly wished I would die. That might sound weak, but migraines created such a darkness within me, that they brought about some very grim ways to end the pain.

At times I wished my pain and symptoms were caused by cancer, a tumor, an aneurysm, or some other terrible illness that the world around me could see and understand. I can remember lying in an MRI tube, the doctors looking for some irregular image, wishing the result would come back positive. At least then I would be able to plan to beat whatever was wrong. Even when the specialists were thinking my symptoms could be MS, I was relieved. But again and again, I was disappointed by another negative test.

As a headache sufferer, I knew that people didn't understand my pain level, "It's only a headache... what's the big deal? Take a couple of aspirin or migraine relief medication." The problem is that people automatically go to their own reference point of what a headache "is." Headaches are not a visible illness, which makes it difficult to comprehend. When you have a visible illness, the people around you can understand and sympathize with the pain. It would be pointless to try and explain the kind of pain I was coping with... so I hid.

I am a prescription drug taker. I have always taken the least amount possible. Sometimes though, the mental fight becomes so exhausting, I would double up or more to kill the pain. This included multiple prescription painkillers, even Trans-mucosal fentanyl (oral lozenge), prescribed for breakthrough cancer pain. I have had several minor surgeries and look forward to them. Why? Because when I told the hospital staff about my migraine, they would give me a fentanyl injection to lower the pain. Being put under anesthesia meant I would not feel any pain, and for that reason, it was worth it.

The constant daily battle is so tiring. The many types of pain experienced with complex headaches and migraines all require mental strength so your life can continue with fatigue,

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confusion, irritability, moodiness, frustration, body weakness (hemiplegia), involuntary movement, neck pain, needle poke sensations and tingly feelings or numbness (paresthesia), and more. These battles affect you every day and become part of who you are.

I am so blessed to have an amazing family, and I give all that I can to them, however, the uncertainties of how I feel day to day and my reactions to the pain create unpredictability in the home environment they have to deal with. I carry much guilt about not being a better friend, brother, son, father, and more loving husband. I have missed family holidays and special events due to my pain. Though I have a great family around me that accepts me unconditionally, I still have a difficult time admitting to what I'm going through day to day. I'm afraid that if I admit to what I'm really feeling, I'm opening the door to defeat. All these things put an unfair burden on my family. I am so sorry that at times, my wife is a single parent. My kids have been so amazing to adapting to how I feel, but it isn't fair to them that they have to change and adapt to me.

I am thankful that for many years, my primary doctor was the best! Dr. Utt would listen to me, and work with me, we were a team. The day I found out he was going to a new clinic only for military veterans, I was afraid. I wasn't sure what was going to happen to me or my health care. I had started mentally pushing myself harder into beating the pain... mind over matter.

I have been to many doctors and specialists to help me with my headache pain. So many times, I didn't want to go see another specialist, I wanted to just give up, and in fact I did. I had been to chiropractors, massage therapists, acupuncturists, naturopaths, rheumatologists, neurologists, and what seems like a million medications and combinations of them, 14 Botox injections in my head every three months, physical therapy... I'm sure I've forgotten a few... All these experiences left me with no hope. Everyone thought they had the answer but with no results. In time I couldn't continue to ride that roller coaster of hope to just fall once again. I thought the answer was to build my mental strength and win the battle that way. But I knew, so much of my life was stolen by pain.

As it turned out, God was about to show me His plan. Because I needed a doctor to help me manage my pain, this led me to Dr. Settle. He was awesome from the start and pointed me in the right direction. In addition to my headaches, I had bad back pain from a car accident over seven years. Many doctors and specialists treated me and after the last round of injections, they said surgery was my last resort. Dr. Settle assessed my pain and recommended a different approach. This led me to Chris Ford, and there my journey of hope begins.

When I first met Chris, he corrected seven years of back pain in one visit... and a couple of follow-ups. I was amazed! When he began to tell me, he would be able to treat my headaches, I thought, "Here we go again!" I automatically put up a defense in my mind so I wouldn't be let down. On my next visit, I gave him a chance. Why not? After all, he did fix my back! On that first visit, he gave me hope. Somehow his innovative treatment methods were able to give me results I had never experienced. Although the pain levels would drop during treatment for about 5-10 seconds, this showed me he was able to do something no one else had done before. This coupled with his strive for perfection and true desire to help people, convinced me my headaches had met their match. Oh, I still had doubts and uncertainties, but with each visit, I grew more confident. Working together, this is a battle Chris, and I are now winning!

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Along with Chris's techniques to correct the cause of pain, he has taught me ways to manage and reduce pain on my own. We are learning together how to treat my body. This has allowed me to take less and less pain medications. Now I can cope with life more effectively on a day-to-day basis.

Through much prayer, I am slowly changing. I have lived in a world of pain for so long that my character is not what I want it to be. As I continue to make great progress with Chris and the pain becomes more manageable, I am facing new challenges and much change both physically and mentally. Now, a few years into my journey, I am starting to grow into the person I hope to become. I understand I can't change 35 years of behavior coping with pain overnight, they have become the fabric of who I am today, but I have chipped the iceberg... and I have hope. I think of it like a bonsai tree. It took many years and constant work to make a tiny tree so beautiful. As I strive to be better, I still fail in many ways, but at this point, I even see my failures as successes, because they cause growth and progress.

I am so thankful God had a plan for me! Alternative Back Care and Chris Ford have helped me change my life. With the results he helped me achieve, I have a new outlook on life. After much prayer, the Kibo project was born. Kibo is a Japanese word that means "hope." I want to bring hope and relief to all those who suffer from headaches and migraines as well as bring support to their families.

Kibo is the good that has come because of my journey with pain, and I am now beginning a new chapter... a chapter of hope!