

CHRONICALLY HAPPY

Joyful Living in Spite of Chronic Illness

The last thing we want is more advice, especially if we are patients or consumers dealing with a chronic illness. After the patient's initial shock and denial subside, most medical staff feel compelled to share their insights regarding what patients could and should be doing to deal more effectively with their new life challenges.

Lori Hartwell is no exception. In *Chronically Happy*, she dives in headfirst with her own advice. But, she warns us. Hartwell sets the tone by acknowledging that she is providing "unsolicited advice from someone who's been there and is still there." Hartwell's words reflect her passion for motivating people. She insists we get on with building our future and do what it takes to get the most out of life today.

Hartwell takes us on her journey through the health care menagerie. Chronically ill patients become accustomed to dealing with a rain-

bow of health care professionals. Often, we wonder which medical staff can empower us to lead full lives and make us feel good once again. Hartwell asks us to stretch our minds and tempts us to lead a happy and fulfilling life. She boldly dares us to tackle a myriad of often confounding issues as seen in the following section headings of the book:

- Finding Dr. Right
- Fun? What's That?
- Relationship Defibrillator: Keep Love Alive
- A Support Group in Exercise Class Clothing

These samples demonstrate the tongue-and-cheek writing style Hartwell uses to involve her audience and make us think—we need to be better than our illnesses and more than our medical teams' prognosis. We should keep working at life from wherever we are, once we have taken the time to wrestle with the difficulties. We know full well that the impossible will take us that much longer. Furthermore, we have the patience to wait it out—achieve and even exceed our goals.

Cartoons pepper the pages of the book. Hartwell's toolbox sections include exercises to get us going and keep us focused on the actions available to us. Whether it is dealing with health insurance benefits, Social Security, financial resources, or even flexing dating muscles, Hartwell lends her life experiences. She sprinkles the book with light-hearted and insightful anecdotes. The result is a festive and cheerful narrative—no matter what the topic.

I recommend reading *Chronically Happy* to all who are touched by someone or something that makes them think twice about their future. This is an opportunity to look at familiar concerns and get the optimist's view from one who has chosen to

pursue her future with joy, or as Hartwell calls it, "using the joy instinct." Stay tuned for future books from Hartwell that bring meaning and value to the bumpy road of chronic illness. ■

— Jennifer Castillo

Chronically Happy—Joyful Living in Spite of Chronic Illness, by Lori Hartwell is available for \$12.95 through Barnes & Noble and Borders bookstores. It can also be ordered online at www.chronicallyhappy.com or www.amazon.com, or by calling Poetic Media Press (415.447.4800 ext. 4).

TO LIVE OR DIE IN ARIZONA

Polycystic Kidney Disease (PKD), dialysis, and transplantation do not seem like the typical ingredients to fire the literary imagination. But they worked for Elizabeth Bruening Lewis while writing her adventure novel *To Live or Die in Arizona*. In fact, they worked so well that Lewis' novel won first place in the fiction category of the National Federation of Press Womens' 2003 Communication Contest.

Lewis writes about heroine Abby Taylor, who suffers from PKD. As she takes a summer-long respite before beginning a dialysis regimen, Abby finds herself chasing a stolen vintage Alfa Romeo, dodging eco-terrorists, and investigating a pumice mine. This is Lewis's first novel, and a sequel, *Dry Death in Arizona*, is in the works. All proceeds from the book are going to the PKD Foundation and the Arizona Kidney Foundation.

Lewis's father, Joseph Bruening, together with Jared Grantham, MD, founded the PKD Foundation 21 years ago. Lewis says that she was inspired by her father's dogged determination. When she and her mother were both diagnosed with PKD 25 years ago, her father met with an almost impenetrable wall when trying to find out more about this disease. Then, by chance, he came across an article about Grantham, who was researching the disease. Within a few years, the PKD Foundation was born.

Over the past 20 years, the Foundation has funded 232 grants totalling \$9.89 million. But Lewis felt more needed to be done to put PKD in the public eye.

"After my mother's death, followed by my own successful transplant in 1989, I determined to do something about this," Lewis said. "I sounded out mainstream publications, but no one was interested. A new approach seemed called for." Thus, the idea of the novel came about. ■

To Live or Die in Arizona can be ordered from the Polycystic Kidney Disease Foundation (800.PKD.Cure) or the Arizona Kidney Foundation (602.840.1644) for \$11.95 plus \$3.50 shipping. It is also available through *The Poisoned Pen* (480.947.2974; 888.560.9919) and at www.amazon.com.

