



Hashimoto's:
FINDING JOY IN THE JOURNEY

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*This E-Book is dedicated to all my Hashi's Sisters
& the millions of women suffering with thyroid disease.*

This is a message of hope.

"I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set [her] free."
~ Michelangelo



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Foreword

"Shannon Garrett has the dedication and passion to show us how traditional medicine is woefully inadequate and outdated. The standard of care has been to treat all symptoms with drugs, but she believes with the correct treatment, you can heal your body rather than keep a chronic condition at bay with pharmaceutical drugs. Shannon shows you how to keep your "insides" young and how this manifests on the outside. Shannon introduced me to an inspiring, medically validated approach to reversing my Hashimoto's thyroid disease and maintaining a healthy, vibrant, mentally sharp, active life – while building my body's natural defenses against age-related diseases."

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My Story

Like most people with thyroid disease I remember the exact time and place when I first heard the words from my physician confirming my medical diagnosis. In my case, it was multiple diagnoses: Hashimoto's thyroiditis, celiac disease, and pernicious anemia (approximately a decade prior I was diagnosed with interstitial cystitis). I remember feeling somewhat elated to learn that what I'd gone through for eight long years wasn't all in my head and I wasn't crazy.

For several years I struggled with mysterious muscle and joint pain, relentless stress & anxiety, panic attacks, rapid heart rate, high blood pressure, fatigue, unexplained weight gain, hair loss, puffiness in the face, hands & feet, blood sugar imbalances, high cholesterol, a tummy that swelled whenever I consumed certain foods, and more only to be told my lab results were within normal range. I truly believed my body was either aging before its time or there were serious hidden health issues that had not yet been detected or tested.

For almost a decade, not a single physician listened to me – my symptoms were shrugged off as either depression or a normal part of aging. The only advice I received was to eat less, exercise more, and to accept a prescription for Xanax. I went through nine doctors and felt incredibly hopeless and defeated to the point I was angry, frustrated and bitter, much of the time. I remember thinking, "is this the best the United States medical system has to offer?" Finally, one day a colleague told me about a physician whom she assured could help me so reluctantly, I scheduled an appointment. However, deep down my thinking at the time was that he would be no different than all the other doctors and I would leave feeling humiliated, hopeless, and defeated all over again.



I finally found a doctor who was willing to listen

At last, physician number ten was very different than the previous nine doctors and I credit Dr. Mark Houston with saving my life and my sanity. I remember crying and trembling in his office because for the first time in this arduous eight year journey, I felt I was in the right place...the environment appeared to be a healing one as opposed to stark white, cold and clinical. Still yet, after eight years of disappointment, I was somewhat riddled with doubt. He held my hands and said "if you will give me six weeks, we will get to the bottom of what is going on." I felt a huge relief simply by hearing those words.

Finally, here before me was a doctor who viewed me as a respectable team member in my own healthcare, believed my symptoms were real, listened intently to what I had to say, and recognized in the lab reports I provided that something was definitely wrong. As of that appointment, I'd been starving myself in an effort to lose weight



and was unable to exercise due to pain in my calves upon walking, I was basically unable to actively participate in things I enjoyed in terms of exercise, dancing, or swimming on most days of the week. I was stressed and anxious and thought I would eventually lose my mind.

The calf pain was a concern to me as well as my previous doctors so I was tested a couple of times for claudication (pain caused by too little blood flow upon exercise) but the tests were negative. For the longest time when I would try to take a simple afternoon walk with my husband in our neighborhood the pain



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would strike within minutes of walking and it was so severe that my calves felt like stiff rubber bands about to break apart. There were a few times I had to stop while husband went to get the car and drive me home. The odd thing was that as soon as I stopped walking, the pain disappeared. This went on for years.

One of the most aggravating times was one Christmas while I was trying to get the guest bedroom ready for my parents' arrival as they would be staying with us for a few days. As I was changing the sheets on the bed, etc., and the pain in my calves fired up making it very difficult to walk around the bed without a lot of discomfort. I had to ask my husband for help and it was frustrating. What was basically a simple task had become a major challenge. "Where was this start & stop pain coming from?" Even in my darkest days of mysterious pain, I always made an effort to attend church every week but soon after I arrived home I crashed on the sofa for most of the day because of fatigue and pain. I often received "but you don't look like you're sick" sorts of comments from friends and family and it was embarrassing and humiliating at times. They did not understand what was going on any more than I did. I relied on makeup and the old adage "fake it 'til you make it" to cover how I truly felt and it fooled a lot of people, even myself for a little while.

Reflecting on the journey and the path ahead; I experienced a variety of mixed emotions

The delight I experienced in receiving not just one valid diagnosis but three quickly turned to shock and a sense of bitterness wondering how in the world did **nine** doctors get it wrong? Honestly, I felt betrayed by them and harbored a sense of frustration toward them for years.

I've always been very health conscious and approached health and self-care from a holistic perspective thanks to the influence of Evelyn, my paternal grandmother. I spent a lot of time with her as a child and through my young



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adult years. Even in the 1960s - 1980s she was the most health conscious person I knew and taught me almost more about vitamins, minerals, and the nutritional content of foods than what I learned in college and through continuing education. She also taught me a lot about self-care and was definitely ahead of her time.

As a registered nurse and autoimmune/thyroid wellness specialist, I knew my condition wasn't something so simple that it could be treated with a drug, or that it was a condition that would eventually pass like a cold or flu. I also realized the journey ahead would be long, and one that carried potential risks for additional autoimmune disorders, and would also likely be for life. The immune system is a complicated and highly-skilled environment with cells that possess long-term memory and it can be very challenging when those cells start to identify and tag tissues that are "self," as a foreign invader to be destroyed. One of the scariest factors was that I understood autoimmune thyroid disease could potentially be a precursor to thyroid cancer, so I had to get on the ball and dig into research. Contrary to what the media reports, thyroid cancer is not the "good" type of cancer. There is no such thing and cancer is cancer.

Feeling confused and emotional at times, I couldn't help from wondering in the back of my mind what it was *literally* in my life or environment that triggered an autoimmune disease in the first place. Was it something I did or didn't do? I was also curious about the timeline for when it all began to manifest to when it showed up the way it did, to what was going on in my life at the time. Of course, I'll never know for sure, but I do sometimes wish I'd known then what I know now!

Hashimoto's is ultimately one of my greatest blessings

Today I am a practicing self-employed integrative nurse, thyroid & autoimmune wellness specialist, certified holistic lifestyle & wellness coach, certified nurse-nutritionist, and certified detox specialist. I can honestly say that being



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diagnosed with autoimmune disease is one of my greatest blessings in life so far, strange as that may seem. I've learned more about the right way to care for myself on a daily basis than ever before. I have come a long way and believe that my Hashimoto's journey as well as secondary autoimmune issues was no accident. Mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically, I feel that I am a wounded healer and love paying forward what I have learned to help other women who are struggling. For me, it is a calling. I can say without a doubt that at least where Hashimoto's is concerned, I am in remission, but it didn't happen overnight, or even in a year.



When clients express anxiety about not getting better fast enough, I gently remind them that thyroid disease did not manifest overnight and it is going to take time, "Rome wasn't built in a day" and healing thyroid disease is a process. The world of

autoimmunity isn't for the fast-paced, quick results oriented person; genuine improvement and maintaining a healthy balance inside and out requires a lot of patience, love, courage and commitment to keep moving forward because there will be obstacles and set-backs. There are also emotional and spiritual aspects to consider which I discuss later. I absolutely believe in divine healing for sure . . . and I believe our bodies are designed to heal given the right environment, lifestyle, and dietary changes. Where autoimmune thyroid disease is concerned, I prefer to use the word "remission," as a reminder that I will always and forever need to care for myself in the many ways I did from the day I was originally diagnosed because I know what lies beneath – a potential to reactivate a confused immune system primed to attack my body if I don't.



My work is to empower women to thyroid wellness

I am devoted to autoimmune and thyroid research and education. It is a blessing to have the opportunity to work with women who are overwhelmed by the challenges of living with thyroid disease – women who are in the place I once was. I proactively seek out referral partnerships with like-minded physicians and other practitioners because I love working in tandem with a client's healthcare provider or wellness team to support them in their journey. Collaboration among integrative, holistic and functional medicine professional's that includes the client (whose wisdom about her body is invaluable) to support her mind, body, spirit and emotions to me represents the true essence of caring. I believe these types of relationships, e.g. physician, wellness consultant, and patient working together as a team fosters so much potential for a woman to truly be empowered and supported by caring, qualified professionals.

One sign of a good doctor for thyroid care is when they acknowledge they don't have all the answers and are open-minded to learning something new. I know for a fact that many thyroid patients (myself included) have presented credible, scientific-based research to their doctor's attention and it was warmly received and appreciated. The truth is there are simply too many unknown factors and challenges of daily living associated with thyroid and autoimmune disease and it simply is impossible for a physician to know everything. To add to the multitude of factors, consider the reality in that although there are commonalities, there are many shades of thyroid disease and we all are unique individuals with varying circumstances, causative factors and individual needs. Medication for thyroid hormone replacement is usually necessary; however, it is never a stand-alone treatment, and it doesn't address a confused and hyperactive immune system in autoimmune thyroid disease. If only it were that straight-forward!



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Ultimately, I hope you enjoy this eBook. It is an abbreviated mix of my personal story with facets you may not have heard before in thyroid self-help books. Over the years there has been no stone left unturned in terms of research and discovery throughout my own journey. I laugh when I think about it sometimes, how much I've learned along the way especially when one of my friends, who is a physician refers to me as a "walking Wikipedia" because of all the information I've gained and share. I've been down the traditional and integrative medicine models as a patient and I've also shadowed some of the best integrative practitioners out there to observe and learn what was available to help and support not only myself as a whole person, but also for all women diagnosed with thyroid disease.

Thyroid disease is never just about the physical body. . . oh no, it pulls in all of your being and it can be draining. My primary message to you is to have hope, faith, trust, love, and forgiveness in your heart and mind. My "shade" of Hashimoto's was a very resistant one and I ultimately turned to low-dose naltrexone (LDN) which has been an integral component of my being able to get to a state of remission. But even that journey wasn't easy because it took me several months to get my body ready to even go on LDN. Whatever you do, never give up. If you are experiencing classic thyroid symptoms please do not accept that your lab values are normal and that it's all in your head.

Thyroid disease is still one of the most misdiagnosed disorders and I don't understand why. Depression is one of the more common diagnoses given to a woman whose Free T4 and TSH are in the normal range, when in reality it's quite possible an underlying thyroid issue. It's possible there is mild depression when brain cells aren't receiving enough Free T3, but this is not the type of depression that typically requires an antidepressant – actually antidepressants can exacerbate thyroid symptoms and make you feel worse. In my guide *Thyroid Happy: Tips & Strategies for Abundant Living* you will find details for the correct thyroid test panel to insist upon above the basic Free T4 and TSH and more.



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Learn the signs for what is and is not a thyroid-competent practitioner and move on when you detect red flags. If you do find yourself in a situation where you need to move on and look for a new doctor, try not to do what I did and harbor ill will toward those who would not or could not help you . . . it isn't personal on their part but more out of a lack of knowing current information or thyroid disease isn't their true focus. For example, many endocrinologists primarily focus on diabetes and thyroid issues are secondary. As a result, they may spend more time reviewing medical journals about diabetes than they do thyroid disease. Forgive that practitioner in your mind and heart, and move on - with copies of your most recent labs in hand.

Bloom where you're planted!



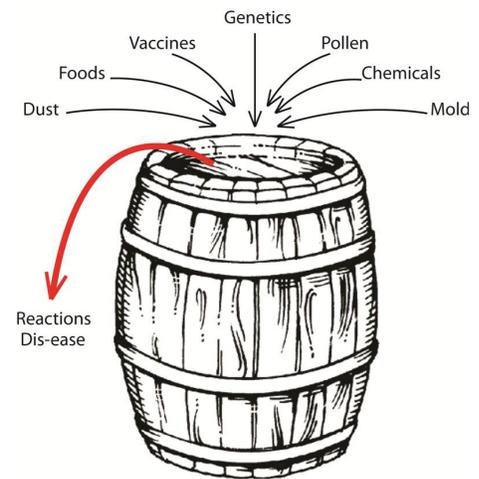
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Have you ever wondered “how did I get thyroid disease?”

Lifestyle factors determine whether or not certain genetic switches are turned on as we age. The barrel effect is an interesting concept for explaining why some of us get sick, or reach our “tipping point” for disease, while others do not. Normal functions of the body’s metabolism produce toxins that are neutralized by the liver so that they aren’t necessarily harmful to the body. However, some people have been exposed during their lifetime to a high level of toxins beyond the normal processes of the body.



Exposure to noxious chemicals in cosmetics, skincare and household cleaning products, chronic stress, mold, infections, sedentary or poor lifestyle choices and unhealthy eating habits are examples of factors that compromise the immune system (which for the most part resides in the small intestine). When disease strikes, it is as if you were going along just fine in life and then one day out of the blue, you’re sick, with or without symptoms. You may get better for a little while, but as time goes on, it seems some sort of health issue or crisis is happening all the time. When I think back, I can remember the precise point in my life when my health became compromised on a regular basis.

Soon after I underwent a tonsillectomy in my mid-twenties, just prior to the years leading up to a diagnosis of Hashimoto’s disease is when I began to experience random mystery health issues that seemed to come and go. This was also the period in time that I started having extreme stress, anxiety and panic attacks. I imagine if you have a thyroid disorder and think back to before you were



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diagnosed, you may also identify when subtle changes in your overall health started to appear. This was the point in time you were reaching your tipping point for disease as the result of too much of what was previously stated overwhelming your immune system. Chronic stress whether physical or emotional is one of the most destructive toxins because it results in a perpetual release of adrenaline and cortisol - and inflammatory chemicals which can potentially be a trigger for the body to turn on itself.

Have you ever been curious when you go to the doctor seeking help for stress-related issues that you are told you need to learn to manage stress or you may become sick? It's because this is very true – and although we all have good stress and bad stress in our lives, when it's too much and we don't have positive coping mechanisms to neutralize its effects, stress can make us physically sick. It can also be fatal.

“THE ROAD TO HEALTH IS PAVED WITH GOOD INTESTINES”
~ Sherry A. Rogers

Several years ago I went on a luxury Royal Caribbean cruise vacation with my husband. Feeling a little self-conscious in my swimsuit, I booked a day in the spa for several treatments, one of which was intended to treat cellulite. The spa was not owned or operated by the cruise line but was actually a Switzerland-based spa which I thought was exciting because I've been to Switzerland and loved it. The woman who administered my treatments was highly educated and knew her business about health and how the body functions.

I will never forget the aesthetician's response when I expressed my concerns about cellulite: “the entire health of the body, including the elimination of cellulite, is related to the health of the small intestine.” At the time, I understood her comment and the rationale behind it but only to a certain degree. I



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understood it more to be about having a regular bowel movement more than anything else. Having since been formally educated through studies in human development and nursing schools in addition to continuing education and certifications in nutrition and detoxification, I understand just how true a statement it really is! Cellulite is simply a superficial expression of toxins accumulated in fat cells. When the body

accumulates excess toxins that cannot be eliminated because of compromised liver function (Phase II of the detoxification cycle) they are stored in fat cells because toxins are fat soluble. Sometimes, particularly if there is a genetic tendency, the body might create lipomas (benign fatty tumors) to store toxins. Does removing the lipoma correct the underlying issue? No, it doesn't.

As it turned out I had a compromised GI tract that needed a lot of tender loving care; I just didn't know it was manifesting when I was concerned about cellulite. I was reaching my tipping point, and cellulite was an indicator. During the years I struggled with obvious hypothyroid symptoms is actually when my issues with cellulite were most noticeable, but remember, I was told everything was normal. Today, after having healed my gut, improved my overall health and do a regular seasonal cleanse, I have very little cellulite as compared to twenty years ago.

If you have thyroid disease (even if not yet diagnosed) chances are your gut health is compromised. Repairing the GI tract takes time and effort, but it is essential that you focus on this amazing and delicate organ system in order to feel and look your best healthy self. When the mucosal lining of the GI tract becomes inflamed or damaged, whether it be from inflammatory or processed foods, toxins, medications, alcohol, antibiotics, yeast, or elevated cortisol from



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stress, it can lead to damage of the protective mucosal lining and intestinal permeability, also known as leaky gut syndrome.

An intestinal lining that is permeable literally means that microscopic holes in the GI tract are allowing toxins to pass directly into the bloodstream. Undigested food particles, bacteria and toxins from the bowel “leak” into the bloodstream. Leaky gut may not necessarily be limited to the GI tract either, symptoms may involve the entire body (Colbert, 2004). You may or may not have received a diagnosis of intestinal permeability *per se* as of yet, but if you have thyroid disease it is important to understand that improving the status of your GI tract should be at the top of your list as a place to begin your healing journey. Without an intact, optimally functioning GI tract, recovering from or improving thyroid disease symptoms will be an exhausting uphill battle. Russian scientist Elie Metchnikoff (1845-1916) best known for his pioneering research into the immune system established the concept of cell-mediated immunity and also won the Nobel Prize for his research in Physiology or Medicine stated “Death begins in the colon.”

Elimination Diets May Help but Testing is Even Better

If you eat food that doesn't digest properly, you may experience inflammation or sluggishness. Inflammation might be expressed as acne, joint pain, a stuffy nose, etc., or in other ways. Sluggishness could manifest as “foggy-brain,” fatigue or malaise. You will be aware of the sluggishness, but you may not be aware of the inflammation because it may not appear as a gastrointestinal or stomach upset, and it may not appear noticeable at all especially if it is low level inflammation. In my seasonal clean-eating & thyroid wellness programs, we eliminate many harder to digest foods, or foods that are common inflammatory foods such as soy, dairy, gluten and other grains, nuts, corn, legumes, sugar, caffeine, citrus, nightshades, eggs, yeast, processed foods, and alcohol to support digestion and absorption. A healthy immune system, mood,



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the ability to cope with stress, balancing blood sugar, and weight loss are directly related to the health of the GI tract. It is a good idea to know which foods you are allergic, intolerant, or sensitive to. You can go through the effort of an elimination diet and journal as you reintroduce certain foods; however, this is also somewhat subjective. For people with thyroid disease, I personally think it's best to rely on objective data.

The truth is we cannot necessarily *feel* what our antibodies in the immune system or other cells in the body are doing at the molecular level – and if even low level inflammation is being triggered by foods, it is a potential for concern. I offer my clients the ALCAT food sensitivity test through my company as a valuable tool full of objective data with access to nutrition consultants. This test assesses inflammation in the leukocytes to determine if certain foods or other substances trigger inflammation. The ALCAT goes beyond the IgG or IgE allergic reactions and isolates inflammation. I like both their Platinum and Comprehensive Wellness 1 test panels because they test a large variety of foods, functional foods and herbs, food additives and food colorings, medications, and molds.

We need to improve the ecology of our gut

Adding probiotics to your diet in the form of homemade cultured foods or high quality probiotic supplements can help to increase the good bacteria in the intestines which will improve digestion, prevent overgrowth of yeast and other pathogens, and synthesize vitamin K (Balch, 2010). My personal favorite probiotic supplements are TheraLac, TruFlora, and VSL#3. TheraLac and TruFlora are intended to be used as a rotation protocol along with TruFiber which contains prebiotics. It turns out that probiotics need a resource to survive, just like any living organism. If you can imagine a lawn, think of probiotics as the grass, and prebiotics as the soil. Besides fiber, prebiotics can also be found in certain raw foods that contain inulin or oligofructose: chicory root, Jerusalem artichokes, dandelion greens, garlic, leeks, onions, bananas, and asparagus.



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Complete digestion is vital not only for your health (by optimizing the assimilation of nutrients), but for your mood as well since 95% of serotonin is produced by the gut (Waldeck, 2013).

Candida albicans (yeast) overgrowth is a very common fungal infection among people with thyroid disease (Haskell, 2011). It is a normal part of our gut flora; however, dysbiosis, which is an imbalance of good and bad bacteria sets the environment for yeast to overpopulate and become an opportunist.

This can lead to leaky gut syndrome and the exacerbation of uncomfortable and bothersome thyroid disease symptoms:

- 🦋 Headaches
- 🦋 Cravings for sweets & yeast feed off sugar!
- 🦋 Foggy brain – foggy thinking
- 🦋 Skin rashes
- 🦋 Fluid retention
- 🦋 Weight gain
- 🦋 Indigestion
- 🦋 Fatigue
- 🦋 Sadness or depression
- 🦋 Vaginal discharge

Candida overgrowth is simply put a nasty little beast that can latch themselves into the lining of the GI tract as they colonize and can be extremely challenging to get rid of (Kumamoto, 2011). Candida overgrowth can also block the action of LDN, a medication referred to in the introduction and is often used for Hashimoto's as well as other forms of autoimmune disease to modulate the immune system. If you suspect you may have a Candida issue, you can request a blood test to check for systemic Candida, and a stool analysis test to assess for yeast in the GI tract. I like Bio Health's 401H GI Pathogen with *Helicobacter pylori* at home stool test and offer it to clients through my company.

Factors that contribute to Candida overgrowth include a diet high in sugar or processed foods, prolonged use of antibiotics, birth control pills, a low-fat/high carbohydrate diet, and people who were not breastfed (Blum, 2013). Candida



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overgrowth must be addressed if you expect to conquer thyroid disease and feel better again.

Improving the health of the GI tract and balancing good to bad bacteria in the gut can be as simple as cleaning up the diet with real, nutrient-dense, anti-inflammatory foods, using high quality probiotics and consuming fermented foods (in moderation), pancreatic or digestive enzymes, removing triggers for stress, practicing daily self-care for managing stress, eliminating your environment of molds (including live indoor plants – especially if the soil isn't changed frequently), and using specific supplements for targeting Candida if it is an issue for you. I have personally used Candex™ by Pure Essence Labs with success as have many of my clients.

There are also stealth infections patients diagnosed with thyroid disease need to be aware of such as *Helicobacter pylori* (commonly associated with Graves' disease), *Yersinia enterocolitica*, and the Epstein-Barr virus. I discuss these in more detail in *Thyroid Happy: Tips & Strategies for Abundant Living*.

The adrenals may become compromised in thyroid disease

The health of the adrenal glands are a concern whenever there is thyroid disease because when the thyroid gland cannot produce enough thyroid hormone to carry the metabolic/energy demands of the body, the adrenal glands are the next organ system to assume this role. The adrenal glands produce cortisol (among other hormones essential to life), our master stress hormone, and it helps the body cope with stress particularly when faced with a threat, e.g. running from a tiger or other life threatening event. However, for many of us carrying around daily stress and not managing it very well results in the trigger to release cortisol. Sometimes the switch is never turned off. The body perceives that we're facing a life threatening situation even though we



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may only be experiencing mental frustration and anxiety with traffic, for example.

This most commonly occurs when we are faced with chronic stress, e.g. post-surgical long-term recovery, chronic infections, unremitting emotional stress and chronic worrying, negative thinking patterns, autoimmune and other inflammatory disorders, lack of sleep, chronic pain, heavy exercise or frequently consuming processed or sugary foods. The body perceives these as stressors which triggers the sympathetic nervous system to launch the “fight or flight” response and the adrenal glands respond by releasing cortisol. I’m sure you can imagine how the adrenal glands can become fatigued when trying to keep up with the cortisol demands of the body in an effort to help you cope with stress while also functioning to support the energy needs normally assumed by the thyroid gland. In the beginning of the stress response cortisol levels are high and over time the adrenal glands can “burn out” if stress remains chronic or unmanaged through lifestyle and self-care strategies. When we reach the point cortisol production is suboptimal it is referred to as adrenal fatigue.

Someone with adrenal fatigue may begin to experience symptoms such as:

- ❖ Low blood pressure
- ❖ Dizziness upon standing
- ❖ Low blood sugar
- ❖ Fatigue
- ❖ Sensitivity to bright lights
- ❖ Inability to cope with stress
- ❖ Cravings for salty foods
- ❖ A weakened immune system
- ❖ Dark under eye circles
- ❖ Joint pain
- ❖ Extreme tiredness soon after exercise

Conventional medicine is beginning to recognize adrenal fatigue as a valid condition (hypoadrenia) whereas previously only frank depletion or excess of cortisol production was recognized by mainstream doctors, e.g. Addison's or Cushing's disease. One benefit of functional medicine is that it seeks to look at dysfunction of an organ system before there is complete failure and it makes



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such good sense. Consider a car . . . wouldn't it be better to find out if something was about to break-down before it actually does? I think so.

How adrenal function is tested is usually done by a 24 hour saliva test in the privacy of your own home. I like the Female Profile III saliva panel by ZRT Laboratory and offer it to my clients through my company. It tests 24 hour cortisol, and the hormones estrogen, progesterone, testosterone and DHEAs which is great because in thyroid disease, typically if one organ system of the three-legged stool of hormone balance is off, they all need to be assessed. The three-legged stool of natural hormonal and metabolic health is made up of the thyroid, the adrenals, and the glands that produce sex hormones. When these are out of balance, it's almost impossible to feel your best (Shames, 2014). Blood testing can be done to check serum cortisol, however, it's not the preferred way to test according to functional and integrative medicine practitioners.

Apparently, the adrenals can release just enough cortisol during the brief and minor pain of venipuncture stick to produce a false result.

As a nurse and thyroid wellness consultant, I am often asked by clients how long it will take to heal their adrenals. My answer is always that it is likely going to be contingent upon what phase of adrenal fatigue they are in, and the degree to which they are willing to proactively take measures to improve their diet and lifestyle. The ultimate ways to heal adrenal fatigue is through eating clean, organic, unprocessed foods anti-inflammatory foods – mostly plants, sufficient

lean animal protein and healthy oils, and by avoiding intense exercise, optimizing vitamin C and magnesium, using sea salt in lemon water upon rising, maintaining optimal blood sugar balance, avoiding extra obligations, and a commitment to daily practice for self-care and relaxation to reduce the effects of stress.

Adaptogens are popular and are a fine choice for adrenal support. I've used them myself; however, they do not replace effective lifestyle changes and



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healthy food choices. When adaptogens are used, I like rhodiola and ashwagandha extracts in individual forms and taken separately. I'm personally not a fan of most adrenal support formulas and find that most of my clients fare better using separate individual herbal formulas and introducing them separately, although it is a personal choice for everyone. Also, if you do choose to use an adaptogen, remember that these are herbs, so it is very important to pay close attention and check into the manufacturer's standardization practices for herbs. You should be able to find this information with a simple phone call or email to inquire. You might be surprised with what you discover.

Inflammation & antioxidants

Inflammation is strongly associated with autoimmune thyroid disease since it is chronic inflammation that is the underlying factor. I have heard medical professionals refer to chronic inflammation as a silent killer because internal and long term inflammation is not visible to the naked eye.

Acute inflammation is a normal process of a healthy immune system – when we cut a finger or sustain an injury that breaks the skin, we need those white and red blood cells to congregate, destroy pathogens, and deliver nutrients to repair the tissues. It's when the immune system becomes hyperactive, chaotic, and confused sets the foundation for chronic, long term inflammation. This leads to a shift in the cells normal responses which can wreak havoc on overall health by keeping the body inflamed, disrupting intestinal balance and compromising the absorption of minerals that would otherwise calm the body (Waldeck, 2013). The best defense in reducing inflammation naturally is to consume real, organic, nutrient-dense foods and oils rich in Omega-3 fatty acids.



It may also be beneficial to consider targeted supplements for inflammation such as:

- ✦ Magnesium
- ✦ Selenium
- ✦ Glutathione – preferably transdermal; I love Glutathione Plus from Neuro Biologix and apply it over my liver after showering
- ✦ N-acetyl Cysteine (NAC)
- ✦ Essential Fatty Acids:
 - ✦ Alpha Linolenic Acid (ALA), found in leafy veggies & flaxseed oil
 - ✦ Eicosapentaenoic Acid (EPA), found in fish oil
 - ✦ Docosahexaenic Acid (DHA), found in fish oil (and breast milk, important for infants)

Forgiveness, Love, & Trust: What do these have to do with the thyroid?

I want to begin this section by first communicating that you have to *believe* you can heal if you want to conquer thyroid disease. It seems like a no-brainer and that everyone would, right? I raise this issue because I have worked with a number of women as clients, and I've witnessed clients who meet their goals and thrive wonderfully well and with vitality. I have also seen other women who didn't see any improvement whatsoever. Perplexed myself, I began to take note and started to consider their similarities and differences. The issues I found may be surprising.

For example, let's say Woman A and Woman B both have the same form of thyroid disease. They share mostly the same demographics, education level, resources, and family dynamics. Both use the same thyroid replacement hormone, have had all the "right" tests and addressed any underlying issues,



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consume an anti-inflammatory diet, follow the same supplement regimen, and healed their GI tract and adrenals. Woman A regularly practices daily self-care for stress management and is markedly improved after one year and overall says she feels amazing. She sees the good in each day and is comfortable in the knowledge that she must work on forgiveness, love, and trust every day.



Woman B, on the other hand, does not practice self-care for reducing stress, denies she has stress or blames others in her life for being the cause of her stress. She denies forgiveness, love, and trust as being any issue whatsoever, and has not improved. Actually, she reports the same distressing symptoms as when she started her healing

journey. She feels that she wasted her time and money on protocols, supplements, doctors, and tests. What's going on here? Is it that Woman A is attentive to the need to reduce stress?

We were designed to heal, Mind, Body, Spirit & Emotions

I am convinced there is much more to recovery than taking the right medication and supplements, having the right lab tests, eating the right foods, doing the right form of exercise, healing the gut, hormones, adrenals and any underlying infections. I believe there is another dimension to healing because God's intention for us is to be healed mind, body, and spirit, not just the physical body in isolation of the other parts of our being. Sometimes when I'm reading self-help books on healing thyroid disease, I appreciate that stress is mentioned



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as a factor in triggering the onset of thyroid disease and that reducing stress is integral in getting better. I get that. However, I believe strongly that potential triggers for thyroid disease may be associated with deeply rooted issues other than and in addition to chronic stress, unhealthy food choices, status of the gut, or the environment.

When women go through my twelve week thyroid healing program, they are surprised to learn that the first three weeks are dedicated to emotional and spiritual wellbeing; particularly, the areas of love, forgiveness & bitterness, trust and communication. When clients choose to work with me they are always eager to get to work on lifestyle changes to improve the adrenal glands, GI tract, healthy eating, have me review their lab work, learn tips for reducing stress and have me devise a comprehensive lifestyle and wellness care plan for them. This is somewhat of a form of a mechanistic approach and is not how I roll.

We must not ignore the significance of our deepest emotional and spiritual selves and how there may be issues which quite possibly have been a contributing factor to being diagnosed with thyroid disease in the first place. Looking at these issues with honesty is really more of a woman's own research and discovery process and when embraced is usually found to be an eye-opener for many women as one of the essential keys to improving their overall wellbeing.

Loving yourself is an essential element for healing all sorts of issues and thyroid disease is no exception. Remember previously, I revealed how thyroid disease affects your whole being.

Love is an action or choice of the will rather than an emotion. If it





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were an emotion, most of us would be living in isolation. Consider a loved one: just because we might be emotionally upset or angry with them over something does not mean we don't love them. Most women in general are very loving and have no problem expressing love to others, e.g. their families, friends, and neighbors. But often it is the case that the same women have never learned to love themselves, usually out of feelings of guilt, shame, or awkwardness.

Some women believe it's being self-centered to love themselves and this simply is not true. Loving ourselves is linked to receiving the love of God and others (Colbert, 2004). Think about it, is it really possible to love others if we do not love ourselves? When I'm working with a client, I'm sometimes sad to learn she does not love herself. When I ask her to do an at home exercise, e.g. to look in the mirror and tell her self "I love you," and mean it with sincerity as if she were saying it to her child or husband, she feels ashamed or silly for even thinking she could ever love herself. Often I find that women will sometimes reveal that they actually despise or hate themselves. They believe they might learn to love themselves when they recover from this illness, or they lose weight, has more energy, looks more attractive, or whatever the case may be. It is very sad because these thoughts are harmful and negative self-talk. The immune system receives chemical messages as a result of negative thinking and if the thoughts occur on a regular basis it is possible to train the body to "attack and destroy" itself.

Another concept to consider is one I heard from a traditional Chinese medicine practitioner. She said where autoimmune thyroid disease is concerned, the immune system has turned on the thyroid gland and its goal is to rid the body of it completely, which most of us already know. She said it is interesting in that since the thyroid gland is in the area of our larynx (voice box) and many women, especially when they were young girls, didn't necessarily feel they had a "voice" in their household. I just think it is an interesting observation.

Nonetheless, the good news is that negative self-talk and lack of love for oneself can be reversed when we begin to learn and adopt a daily practice of



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accepting that we are worthy of loving ourselves unconditionally, despite our health issues and all the baggage. The truth is we are all loved, and the body and mind need to receive the message that you truly and genuinely love yourself regardless of your circumstances.

Forgiving yourself is a very tough act for many of us. Often we hold on to a stand of not forgiving as a coping mechanism to protect our own heart when we have been hurt. Jesus did not teach the message of forgiveness because forgiving is easy because it definitely isn't. Even though it cannot be scientifically proven, I am convinced that a prolonged or chronic inability to forgive people or situations or hang on to bitterness is an underlying cause of chronic disease including thyroid issues and may also attribute to the exacerbation of symptoms. For me personally, don't think for a second that it wasn't extremely difficult to let go of irritation, frustration, aggravation, and other negative emotions toward the nine doctors who led me around for eight difficult years, struggling with scary symptoms while basically dismissing me as being naïve and depressed during my appointments with them. One day I realized that all of those destructive thoughts and emotions were actually compromising any potential of my getting better by keeping my body, mind, heart and spirit inflamed.

Forgiveness is a *choice* that grants freedom . . . because it frees the heart to love and releases bitterness toward a person or situation in which you were hurt. To forgive does not mean the hurtful situation never happened or that it doesn't matter. Forgiving simply means you are releasing being held hostage of the bitterness related





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to the person or situation in which you were hurt. Believe me, letting go isn't without a lot of effort but with commitment, and with God's help, it is certainly possible. An inability to forgive yourself, others, and situations is not only self-defeating and toxic it deters all possibility for mind-body-spirit-emotion restoration.

Trusting yourself is something we all must embrace in order to achieve anything in life and it also applies to goals for recovering from thyroid disease. Trust in ourselves and abilities to follow through with protocols, daily regimens for self-care, healthy eating, appropriate exercise and trust in our healthcare providers. What I learned through moral theology in nursing school as well as through personal life experience is that genuine trust requires that we must choose forgiveness and love first. You cannot fully have trust without first having love and forgiveness. Love + Forgiveness leads to Trust. Forgiving and loving yourself as well as others is foundational to have trust (refineus.org).

Final Words

My life changed forever after being diagnosed with Hashimoto's, celiac disease, interstitial cystitis and pernicious anemia. In the beginning I thought it was going to be a life sentence and it was a very unsettling time for me . . . I was always the health nut who knew everything, or so I thought. At the height of my most troubling symptoms, I was newly married. I'm not sure my husband realized what was going on at the time and frankly, I didn't either. Thyroid disease is not a life sentence, but you do have to make major lifestyle changes and seek the right wellness team and practitioners for your care. I find it is therapeutic to learn to understand what is actually happening in your body and be a proactive participant in your healthcare rather than being passive. On average, thyroid patients go through eight to ten doctors before finding one who will listen to them or order the correct tests – educating yourself along the way will empower



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you to participate as a contributing member which your doctor should appreciate.

Through the diagnoses, discovery, and work to address all of my own mind-body-spirit-emotion issues, I am healthier today than I was a long time ago, even prior to reaching my tipping point. I've learned truths about how the body functions and how it should be cared for. I've learned how important daily self-care for stress reduction really is because I have a tendency to struggle with compassion fatigue. I know how vital it is to consume real, organic, unprocessed foods and drink clean water. I have not mastered everything as of yet because I'm still a work in progress. God isn't finished with me yet, but I have made great strides in the areas of forgiveness, love, and trust for my own sake and I hope you do to. I hope you'll check out the companion guide *Thyroid Happy: Tips & Strategies for Abundant Living* included in The Thyroid Bundle. It contains detailed self-care tips and strategies for living with thyroid disease and a lot more. If I can accomplish the level of health I have achieved from where I began, I know you can too. I sincerely wish you the best in your recovery and I want you to remember, healing is a journey, not a destination.



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About the Author



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