

Q & A with Hillary Rubin and Kara-Leigh Grant

How did you feel when you were diagnosed with MS?

I was pissed off at first since it seemed like a sentence I was handed for doing something wrong. Then I blamed others and ultimately blamed myself doing all I could to figure out what I did wrong instead of seeing what was right. Under all of that at the time I believed in a punishing god and was pissed off at god as well since I had a troubling childhood I then thought well with all that behind me now this. It was only after embracing my diagnosis with accepting it and then learning that there was much more to it than even the doctors could explain.

What was your life like then?

In 1996 I was working in the fashion industry at Prada, in a relationship and was becoming quite the power couple. I made sure I was at the right parties and places and looked the part. The outside is all that mattered as well as what others thought – this was the real prison I created myself. I partied and worked intense days as well as with people who were abusive – yes its fashion and there is something to say about the Devil Wears Prada. Funny enough I thought my life was ok but inside I was crumbling to keep it all together mostly for the display to others.

What support did the medical profession offer, how did they outline your options?

My options did not look great they give it all to you right up front and at the time disregarded any alternative routes as well as diet connections. They offered medications mostly and feel this is the only way... My doctor at the time said you can do yoga, acupuncture and other things but you must take the meds. I never felt taken care of for the most part but alone and it all was so clinical and not personal.

Was there a turning point when you just realized it was up to you how you handled MS? What was that turning point like?

It was pretty much in the beginning after I went to over a handful of Doctors including a spinal surgeon and a headache specialist I then was offered to have a spinal tap to make it 100%. One doctor basically said to me we are 99% you have it from your MRI and for the 1% you can have a spinal tap. I asked what that was and after the details a voice in my was strong and said No Way. When I said no to having a spinal tap I saw that my choices actually were going to be how I took my power back. From that day on I delved into books on health, eating, personal growth along with starting yoga this was when the light began to break through the cracks in the situation. I am grateful for cracks since the light always wants to shine... I have to share that is was as if I was given my life back and it was up to be to take it where I wanted to.

Do you remember your first yoga experience?

Yes, I will never forget it. I went to a place near my home in the Flatiron district of NYC. The studio is no longer there. My teacher Stephanie Foster was strong and sweet; she even looked a bit like Susan Sarandon and held a black belt in karate. I never shared my situation but as I began to get into my body again with a focus (as a child I was a gymnast and at the time was working out in a gym). I felt more alive than ever and knew this was going to be a medicine, a friend, a relationship and a path that I was seeking for many years.

How has yoga practice helped you deal with MS?

Well I never really see myself having to “deal with MS”. I was diagnosed with MS just like I have brown hair it all changes and does not define who we really are. Yoga has opened me to who I am on a deeper level and gifted me holistic tools to grow from. MS is my teacher and yoga has been the teachings to grow into the best I can be every day. Yoga keeps me humble, strengthens me, heals me, uplifts me and is one relationship that is ever changing. Every time I come to my mat I am different and at the end of my practice again I have evolved. This is a gift to know I am co-participating with my process of being more of myself.

How do you view your diagnosis now?

It is a teacher, blessing and tool that have helped me and now I am able to help others rid themselves of being a victim to feeling afraid of the unknown.

What advice/words of support do you have for other people dealing with health issues?

First of all we must remember that **Everyone** is dealing with something. This “something” is a gateway or even an invitation to enjoy the process of evolving into the best you, you can be.

Ok, once you have gone through being mad, blaming and feeling bad for yourself. Then take this on as an opportunity to see there is more working in your body than not. Follow it be embracing, accepting it and seeing its like you have been given a new major in life – To listen and care for your body. To get involved with the healing process and ask questions to see how you can grow from your situation into seeing it as a gift. Always know you are not your diagnosis and you are not alone.

What good things have come about because of your MS?

I have been blessed to meet amazing teachers, healers and become an inspiration while I have found my gift in my diagnosis. Learning that life is a gift and that taking care of my body and living a life with a greater awareness is one of the best choices I've made. Today, I am grateful to be able to lead a movement to empower those who feel there are not able to find who there are under the diagnosis and remove the pain and work towards a hopeful future.

As we move to understanding our role as creators in this life, what's your vision for our World?

As a friend and teacher of mine says, "A world that works for us all." To find that whatever we are dealing with to know we are not alone and become more aware that we are all connected and if one of us is sick we all feel this.

A 3 step process to start your process of healing today:

Use a journal or piece of paper or even a 3X5 card and read each one or the one you choose out loud while looking at yourself in the mirror.

Make a commitment to do this for one day or an entire month as the more attention you put to this the more the energy of wellness will follow.

This process will shift your cells and allow you to vibrate with greater health.

1. I am grateful for my challenge of _____ as I know that I will find the teacher that lives within my situation. My challenge of _____ is one of my greatest gifts. Thank you for opening me to more of myself.

2. Today, I lovingly embrace _____ and welcome my process of healing. Today I open to what is to be revealed to me from my _____. I know at this moment that health and wellness is my birthright and my process begins with my being part of saying YES to my process and I am ready to discover the blessings in my challenge. (notice if anything comes up and then you can use this as a meditation and ask it aloud)

3. I am ready to release one habit that keeps me from feeling good about myself – choose releasing the need to complain, gossip, putting yourself down, smoking, drinking alcohol, using drugs, eating sweets, or anything else that may make sense to you.