

## **What is “I Am Not a Mess!” and how did it come to exist?**

I Am Not a Mess is a vibrant new company dedicated to helping individuals diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and other auto-immune diseases embrace their diagnoses and learn valuable holistic tools to help them live the best life possible, evolving beyond the initial fears of life with a diagnosis.

*Foundations*, the first in a DVD series dedicated to finding this type of empowerment through yoga, was just released and is now available on our website. Working on the DVD was a personal offering and a very meaningful journey for me – yoga is the medium I have used to take control of my own life and move forward from my own diagnosis with MS 12 years ago.

**You mentioned that “I am Not a Mess” will provide support for those individuals diagnosed with MS; specifically “tools” to help them lead a better life. Can you give an example of what some of those tools look like?**

The DVD is a tool, but we are also excited as we create other media products, books, companion worksheets, tele-seminars and events to offer support. MY process is a bit like this: First, I guide individuals diagnosed with MS/Autoimmune diseases to practice gratitude for where they are in life. Second, have them begin to embrace their diagnosis and discover how it plays as the teacher. Third, take inventory of their lifestyle choices; how they eat, speak and treat themselves. Then release toxic habits that are the small steps begin to start living with greater awareness. Lastly, to understand that we are always growing and evolving and every day will be a new adventure in healing.

**Why did you name your company “I Am Not a Mess!”?**

At the time, I was working on my book but did not have a title. A friend called me from New York and shared with me a documentary called “Crazy Sexy Cancer.” I heard the title and it was uncomfortable, yet provocative. I began to think and then surrendered and what came through me was “ I Am Not a Mess – You Are Not Your Diagnosis.” This is what I believe as I never say, “ I have MS” but I say “I was given a blessing and this was a diagnosis of MS”.

While living in New York City before my diagnosis, I found myself repeating this sentiment time and time again. From the moment I was diagnosed on, I became very aware of the mantras we all speak and how they manifest to become our greatest teachers. On another note I think we all relate to a part of our life feeling “A Mess” and to transform that when we “Bless the Mess” we use our challenges to take us to new places in our lives.

**Do you remember your first yoga experience?**

Yes, and I will never forget it. I went to a place near my home in the Flatiron district of NYC. A studio that is no longer there. My teacher Stephanie Foster was strong and sweet; she looked a bit like Susan Sarandon and held a black belt in karate. I never shared my health 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 I'd been working out in a gym – I felt more alive than ever and knew practicing yoga was going to be a medicine, a friend, a relationship and a path that I would seek for many years.

**How has yoga helped you deal with MS?**

Well I never really see myself having to “deal with” MS. I was diagnosed with MS, but just like I have brown hair, that fact does not define who we truly are. Yoga has opened me up to who I am on a deeper level and given me the gift of holistic tools to learn and grow from. MS is my teacher and yoga has helped me to grow into the best I can be every day. Yoga keeps me humble, strengthens me, heals me, and uplifts me. It's a constant 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. After being diagnosed with MS in 1996, I could have become a victim but instead I chose to turn it around into an opportunity to be involved in my process of healing. It's a gift to know I am involved in this process of being more of myself, and that is the gift of yoga.

**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 and sometimes even an invitation to enjoy the process of evolving into the best you, you can possibly be. Once you've gone through being angry, blaming and feeling bad for yourself, then you can take this on as an opportunity to see there is more working in your body than not. Once you can accept it, you can embrace it, and then it's like you've been given a new lease on life – to listen and care for your body. Get involved with your healing process and ask questions. See how you can grow from your situation and accept it as a gift. Always know you are not your diagnosis and you are not alone.