

Restored by Grace

How Faith Carried Me Through From
Health Crisis into Abundant Life

*A Raw, Honest Story of Recovery & The
Wake-Up Call that Changed Everything*

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Printed in the United States of America.

This book is dedicated to all who are determined to find the answers you have been seeking, especially when feeling unheard and unsure of where to turn.

I was there too. For a long time, I thought I was just going to have to deal with the physical symptoms I was experiencing, but I found breakthrough and continue to help others. There may seem to be no real relief, but I am living proof that there is hope and that God always has a way for us. It may take longer than you like and there may be set backs, but as you stay faithful to the Lord in the process, you will see progress and change. I know that you will look back and be amazed at the progress that you have made.

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Chapter 1

My Breaking Point and God's Turning Point

Growing up on a farm in upstate New York, I lived a relatively healthy life without any major issues. I dealt with what would be considered a 'normal' youth in terms of health. As a family we had the cycles of the stomach bug, colds and what not, but nothing earth shattering. We had moments of healthy eating, but it was largely what was convenient such as fast food, pizza and more. I understand that my parents did the best from what they knew and I'd say overall we came out doing okay for ourselves. As I look back, I can see that we did not get a useful understanding of nutrition, what leads to inflammation and how to prevent it. It just wasn't taught nor well known as widely in those days.

That being said, the story of my health journey that I want to share starts in my growing years as I dealt with painful and miserable menstrual cycles, weight fluctuations and gastrointestinal (GI) issues. It was considered 'usual' to have menstrual cramps, heavy bleeding and other discomfort during that time. As is the case for many, these symptoms were tolerated because others in the family dealt with it too. It was also considered normal to have belching, occasional constipation and passing gas. To be bloated was just expected after a meal. I dealt with all those things and just shrugged them off as normal life. But now I know those were all signs that something was happening on the inside that was not healthy.

Over time, fast forwarding to 2009, I discovered more problems. I had just moved to Tennessee and was beginning to branch out on my own and make something for myself. I had been involved in church and ministry, finding a social network and enjoying working as a nurse in the hospital. I was still having the menstrual distress, and this was the time the GI issues became more complex. I would be in a social or work setting and have this severe abdominal discomfort with pain and it seemed to come on when I was hungry. When I would get hungry; however, I would also feel very nauseous. Sometimes the pain and nausea would relieve with a cracker or other snack, but not every time. Most of the time they would relieve with a trip to the bathroom or passing gas, which was quite embarrassing when out in public.

I distinctively remember dealing with this at a (new) friend's house and I was so embarrassed.

When I was out and about and the symptoms came on, I would often push through until I got home. I started to just keep ginger ale nearby since it did relieve the pain sometimes. I was also dealing with constipation, which I did bring up to an OB-GYN, but only since I was beginning to have hemorrhoids. Otherwise, I would have just dealt with it like I did for many years. She gave me some Metamucil and briefly stated I should increase fiber. That was about it – no practical steps, no nutritional guidance. These cycles of pain, constipation, etc. would continue to go on intermittently for nearly 10 years. I didn't know what to think of it, other than it's just something I would have to learn to live with. I didn't think I could find someone who would understand.

Then came March of 2016, this time living in Florida. It started as a usual day working my shift in the hospital. It was getting toward lunch and I was feeling hungry. I knew I would potentially be feeling a certain way if I didn't eat, but I was plugging away with the nursing tasks of the shift. Unfortunately, as part of being a nurse and a woman, I worked with the perception to just push through anyway. So, then came on the mild nausea and very mild discomfort. I was eventually able to step away and get some food, even though by the time I sat down I had already started to feel some pain, which usually meant I would struggle with gas and more pain. Eating seemed to bring some relief, but I still had mild discomfort. I'm not exactly sure how much longer after, but the mild pain worsened and I eventually was doubled over and could not finish my work. It was so painful that I was starting to get emotional. The charge nurse took one look at me and sent me to the emergency room. At least I was already at the hospital! This was the first time I remember actually thinking I was going to vomit and I eventually did. Up to this point, I had only the nausea and pain to deal with, but this time was different.

Now I was the one in the hospital bed and it felt so out of place. I was given the medication Zofran for the nausea, but it did not seem to cut it. This perplexed me because I remember giving Zofran countless times and it would often help my patients. After some time; however, I was still in a lot of pain and dry heaving. So, then I received Compazine and

Morphine together – I do not recommend! To put into context, Compazine is a heavy hitter antihistamine and Morphine is a hefty pain medication. Both can make anyone groggy when given separately, but together makes this effect even stronger. In this case, at least the nausea and pain relieved.

You would think this was the lowest point, but not quite. I stayed in the hospital overnight and advocated heavily to be discharged the next day because I felt better and knew that I did not need to be there. I was given the medication Protonix, which is prescribed for acid reflux. I was discouraged because I just knew that it would not work and that reflux was not the reason for this, but it was difficult at the time to articulate what I felt. I followed up with my primary and he brought up a great point that what I had been experiencing was most likely a mild case of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Looking back, I have to agree – more about that later. Still, I left this experience wondering how to relieve this and what to do to prevent these episodes. I knew stress was a factor, but I was struggling with effective management strategies. I knew constipation was connected, but I wasn't sure at the time why and how to effectively help this situation.

It was the next year, in 2017, that my husband and I decided to take steps toward losing weight. It was about 2011 that I realized I was beginning to gain excess weight, but as with the other things going on, I didn't think much of it and figured I'd be fine as long as I don't 'go crazy' with sweets and unhealthy foods. Over the years; however, I continued to fluctuate and would try to just exercise more, eat more salads and all that I thought I knew. But all that did was make me tired of salads and bored with work outs. Finally, we reached a point that we both needed to do something. We started Weight Watchers and kept on with that with good results. I reached what I thought was my best weight, especially since I had lost over 30 pounds in over a year. But my husband pointed out that it just felt like we were starving ourselves and he did not feel good. As we moved away from that system, we held onto a few things such as using a food scale, monitoring portions and keeping a better eye on sweets, among other helpful things. We kept those things in practice; however, it became difficult to just 'wing it' without a true system to follow. Eventually we started to gain more weight and so we tried the Noom program; however, came to the same situation of feeling like we were starving and not seeing results.

Another challenge to this was that I did not have many people to look to for support in this, because they looked at me and 'would not guess' that I was overweight. I understand what they are saying and they were trying to just be kind; however, the excess weight made be uncomfortable and affected my quality of life, as well as feeling comfortable in my own skin. I can also feel it in my clothes and I just the heaviness of the extra weight. If that is you, please don't be discouraged. I feel like we all deal with this at some point and we know when it doesn't feel right. After dropping Noom, we just kept praying through what would help us. It just seemed like there was no way out.

As time went on from there, I was finishing up nurse practitioner training and became aware of the root cause approach with functional medicine. I was very intrigued because of what I had seen while working in the medical field and that this approach actually helps people to live their best life with habits that stick. In my nursing experience, I had watched so many patients be discharged from the hospital, yet because as nurses we are not provided the sufficient time to truly teach healthy nutrition and lifestyle for them, they would return for the same problems. But it was through understanding functional medicine and the root cause approach that opened my eyes to patterns of inflammation, and how that affects gut health, weight, hormonal imbalances and more. I began to study this further and entered a program to learn more so I can help others. During that time, I was able to see where I needed to make changes in my personal life, especially when I could feel myself gaining weight and was struggling to keep it off. As I learned about the inflammatory properties of gluten, I could sense from the Lord that it was time to work toward avoiding gluten. I even identified the generalized swelling and stubborn weight gain as symptoms of gluten intolerance as my own experience and became suspicious. However, I brushed it off for quite a while.

By the time 2023 came along, though, I had to make the change. It was late January and I had the worst menstrual cycle, lower back pain and GI distress that I had experienced up to that point. Growing up on a dairy farm tossing hay bales and all sorts of hefty things, then following that up with a nursing career with lifting people from 100-300 pounds every week put my back in rough shape. So, by this time, in combination with high stress, it all came crashing down at once. There were family things going on, work stressors, ministry responsibilities and personal factors to attempt to balance. As I went to see a chiropractor,

she told me that avoiding sugar, gluten and dairy around the time of my cycle would help relief the pain and inflammation. As soon as I heard 'gluten,' I knew it was time. From that point, I began the journey of avoiding gluten. I had a lot to learn, since gluten is hidden in so many foods and substances. I did not fully understand how it was affecting me and my specific symptoms; however, I just knew that I needed to start there.

The journey of discovery from here was truly transforming, and I feel I am still learning and growing from the healing. But a life of mismanaged stress, unhealthy eating, unhealthy relational boundaries and more led to this moment. Once I finally saw the light, it was so eye opening and healing that it felt like coming home.

Chapter 2

My Journey to Healing and Transformation

Now was the time to move forward. I sought after help for myself with insight from someone who understood the root cause approach. In the midst of investigation, I discovered from stool and hormone testing that my gut health was connected to my hormonal health and that years and years of mismanaged stress in life had contributed to many of the issues that I was facing. For example, the initial stool test revealed general and gallbladder inflammation, harmful bacterial overgrowth and gluten sensitivity in my gut. The gluten sensitivity was to the point that my immune system was negatively impacted, meaning my immune system was on high alert. I had started with taking supplements to help digestion and gallbladder function, plus others for detox support and overall immune support that would start the healing process. It took a while for me to articulate how I felt when I was exposed to gluten, such as dizzy moments, swelling, weight gain and brain fog. I was surprised to see that I did not have GI symptoms with gluten, even though it has been wreaking havoc on my GI system.

The gallbladder inflammation seemed to relate to the GI symptoms I had dealt with for so long and has greatly improved with use of bile salts and digestive enzymes. In addition to avoiding gluten, I also worked toward avoiding adding sugars and removing any processed foods. One of the greatest improvements also came from implementing fiber in my daily diet. Once I began using a fiber supplement, it was a great relief. When dealing with constipation that also came with pain and impaired quality of life, having relief is life changing. I know that this simple addition and improvement is also one of the great motivators that has helped my body with healthy detox patterns as well.

Regarding hormones, the initial testing with the DUTCH complete revealed at the time that I had very low progesterone, plus factors of estrogen metabolism and detoxification patterns revealed areas of concern. One of these areas of concern was that one of the types of estrogen was not breaking down well and I was leaning toward a potentially toxic pattern if I did not make necessary changes. Additionally, I saw where my cortisol pattern was not

optimal and that years of mismanaged stress has impacted my nervous system, hormones and GI system. Suddenly I felt an urgency to make changes because this revealed the impact on my ability to conceive and have optimal health that would also impact my wellness in years to come. From these results, and this revelation, I learned I needed to target nutrition that would support my body's natural detoxification patterns, take progesterone for a time, and that I really needed to identify where I could improve stress management.

I feel managing stress is a challenge for all of us in many ways. At the time of these changes, I realized that I needed to stop dwelling on things, especially those that are out of my control. It is human nature to identify where we can attempt to control the narrative because we have a sense of comfort or peace, but the reality is that we can only control ourselves and it is our trust God to lead us that helps us to find the peace we seek. I began to understand at this time where I needed to let the things go that I did not understand and that I needed to hope in the truth of God's presence and sovereignty. It has taken time, but this area of my life has gotten much better and I continue to seek where I can become less controlling and more trusting in Him. Practically, I would practice deep breathing exercises, take walks when possible, and find areas of creativity and what brings me joy. Consistently reminding myself of the eternal mindset has been the greatest help in this as well (see Hebrews 12:1-2).

As I saw these things, I started to make changes right away. I prayed through the steps, but also felt the urgency, knowing that this was affecting my quality of life. I focused on nutritional changes because I had learned how much food is fuel and affects our cellular health so much. I realized where dairy had also impacted my health, though I do not completely avoid it. Additionally, I could feel the cravings for sodas and processed foods gradually dissipate. Some of it took intention, but I also could see the grace of God allowing me to see what was best, not just what satisfied a taste in the moment.

Keeping myself from gluten has not been nearly as challenging as attempting to avoid sugar. There was a time that I had enjoyed sugar and sweets very much; however, over time this has changed. Initially it was will-power, but eventually that gives out. I finally had a moment while at a church conference where I was just seeking the Lord through the time for

His intervention in my life. When we returned home, I realized that my attraction to having chocolate always ready had gone! I realized that I was not craving something sweet when I had a lull moment. What a blessing! I share that to say stewardship is important and a vital part of the process; however, there are moments when the Lord miraculously changes our tastes and desires to align with what is good for us. God did this for me, and I believe He can do this for you too! In 1 Samuel 15, we read that God desires obedience more than sacrifice. While obedience may require sacrifice from time to time, God honors our heart motivation and if that sacrifice was in vain or for any other reason than pleasing Him, we will not see a great reward. However, when our mission and goal is to please Him, such as when He says our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit in 2 Corinthians 10, He honors that obedience. I have had to walk this out in my health journey when choosing to avoid those things that I know would be harmful for me. I discovered substances and products that are commonly used in daily life that harm hormones, gut health and more. While not perfectly, my mission has been to pray through avoiding those chemicals and which items need to be addressed right away.

To this day I do occasionally struggle with completely avoiding sugar, but it is much better. There is still plenty of progress to make; however, I know that my health today is much better than it was. I am understanding more and more what health stewardship looks like and it begins with being sensitive to the leading of the Lord with what is important for my personal journey.

No journey is one-size-fits all. We are all uniquely made with special talents and giftings only we were created to express. In my personal walk, I have repeated testing for my gut health and hormone health. They have greatly improved but still show remnants of a stressful life. I feel this is the same for all of us that managing stress is easier said than done. However, not being able to take a step back and truly rest in the Lord greatly affects our physical health. I have recognized this pattern in my body's response to stressful situations. Especially when there is a deadline or something pressing occurring, I feel it in my gut health and it is also expressed with my hormones. I continue to take fiber every day because I know what it was like to be miserably constipated. I have been able to listen to my body much better these days and it is very freeing. When those intense moments arise, it is not always right

away, but I do my best to take a few deep breaths and listen to the Holy Spirit. Sometimes I need to step away and take a walk. Either way, I remember how it affects my body and my goal is to return to balance instead of distress.

I have been free of the painful abdominal distress moments and rarely get nauseous. While every system is not at its peak, I feel cleaner and healthier. I still go up and down with weight, but overall, I have kept the excess away. There are times when I wish it would be better, but at the same time, I remember where I was and where my intentions are now and have grace for myself in the moment. I do not get on the scale often because I am not here to chase numbers. I have done my best to not find my identity in how I look or feel because how much I weigh or how it is all distributed does not define me. When there is gain, it helps me remember to make adjustments and maintain healthy patterns.

At this point in my life, I hope to have enough of a handle on where I am that I can sense when something is off and work towards restoration. We all make choices and I have enjoyed some sweets and treats here and there, but my habits are to be clean, whole and prosperous. I give myself grace for the moments I let myself off the proverbial wagon and get back up as soon as I can.

Chapter 3

5 Key Lessons I Wish I Knew Sooner

In this journey, as with any, we seem to see things clearer from hind-sight. There are lessons I wish I would have learned a long time ago; however, the life I have lived and the person I am is the result of those decisions and events. I have learned from them and will continue to learn as I go. Here are 5 key lessons and principles I wish I knew sooner (but I give myself grace because I live to tell the story):

1. True healing comes from identifying root causes, not just chasing symptoms

I became comfortable with the symptoms I was experiencing for years – post nasal drip, the GI symptoms, menstrual symptoms and others. It was not apparent back then to take a deeper look. The symptoms seemed minor enough for me to just handle and push through. Even though at times I really struggled, I did not see anything that I was taught would be concerning. Now I know that beginning truly healthy habits early creates a healing environment and that when issues arise, it is worth it to take a look at testing and evaluating the situation further. When the gut microbiome is tested, we can see so much more information as to what is going on the body as a whole. While the root cause approach can take more time to get to resolve than conventional measures, it is more thorough and provides true answers that lead to the right strategies for healing.

I was not ever drawn to gut health and quite frankly, I did not want any part of it. As a cardiac nurse, I was more interested in heart health and intensive care environments. However, after going through my own health journey and getting my own stool tested to evaluate, I have realized how central gut health is to the overall health picture. My eyes were opened to how it connected to my immune system and that the post nasal drip that I dealt with almost consistently could be addressed with cleaning up my diet because my gut was imbalanced. It is not enough to just address symptoms one by one, which subsequently ignores others. There needs to be evaluation of the entire

picture, from environment to life events to physical symptoms and everything in between. The mainstream medical world addresses symptoms as they relate to diseases and conditions, then uses medication to treat those symptoms. There is not enough time given in visits to truly investigate where the imbalance is so that restoration can take place. This is why functional medicine and the root cause approach has gained some traction, because many more practitioners are stepping out of the box and seeking true answers. Also, many people are becoming aware for themselves of the necessity to find the root cause.

Finding the root cause also involves taking a closer look into labs and advanced testing. Even the routine lab sets that conventional providers use can provide more information, even when they result as normal but you still feel lousy. Using a functional lens helps to identify patterns that lead to real answers. Additional labs and advanced tests, such as a fuller thyroid panel, fasting insulin, and stool and hormone testing, will guide treatment plans that take a closer look into true patterns and can pinpoint what your body needs, not just a 'one-size-fits-all' answer that does not get to the root.

2. It's okay to not be okay and to ask for help

Many patterns in life become routine for many people. Dealing with constipation, having bloating and gas, cycle distress, and post nasal drip is just a few of examples. But these are clues that the body is going through a struggle. I thought I was just supposed to deal with the constipation, pain and other issues. I thought it was routine to just have cramping, heavy cycles and so forth. I was afraid to ask for help because I felt like I was just going to be brushed off as just having common symptoms, or that I was 'handling' it enough that maybe I would just be told that I was 'fine.' But I was not fine. I was miserable and felt defeated. The truth is that we were not meant to face this life alone and that at times we need to seek help to find the answers we need. I was struggling for a long time and it felt like no else could understand, so it gave me the impression that my struggles were not important enough to bring up or try to seek help for. Now I know and understand that even the smallest of symptoms can be a sign of something happening. Not that we need to be alarmed with everything that comes

up, but the fact is that when there is a picture forming from a handful of signs, we need to pay attention and speak up instead of just assuming someone else will notice.

Seeking guidance also helps with identifying lifestyle measures that prevent chronic illness and patterns that may potentially lead to detrimental disorders. There may be subtle mindsets and habits that are hindering us from living the fullest of our lives. Having a professional who understands these aspects to walk alongside us in these times is crucial to knowing the steps to take in our unique journey.

3. Our body, mind and spirit are more in tune that we realize

We are also in tune with our bodies more than we give ourselves credit for. God created us intricately and wonderfully (see Psalm 139). As I continued to understand the root cause approach, even more revelation came about this. How we handle our emotions impacts our physical health and vice versa. I also experienced this when I would have GI distress while in stressful situations. However, taking the time to reset our mind and truly depend on the Lord's peace does more than just calm us down. It actually tells our body to reset, digest, and function healthily.

Rather than seeing them separately, take a moment to identify where your body, mind and spirit are connected. Our physical health is impacted by our mentalities and emotions, which are also influenced by our spiritual health. When we have Jesus Christ as our firm foundation and consistently seek to know Him and His ways, we are able to put righteous thoughts into practice that help our bodies heal and function well. Today, remind yourself that you are a steward of the body God has given you and you have an opportunity to make choices that bring life and health (see Romans 12:1-2 and 1 Corinthians 3:16).

4. How we fuel our bodies fuels our life – nutrition is connected with hormonal balance, inflammation and more

For a long time, I did not see the connection between healthy hormonal function and the foods I ate, including how I ate. I thought that I would just have to get used to the discomfort and that when I tried to lose weight that I just needed more 'will-power'

or to 'muscle through.' But there were key pieces I missed. Nutrition affected how my body was detoxing, breaking down hormones and responding to inflammation. The many years that I lived eating processed foods and just eating to satisfy hunger led me to the symptoms I was facing. I have to thank God in His direction of opening my eyes in the time that He did, because I could have been headed down a much more difficult road if I did not make any changes.

Returning to whole foods, adequate hydration, balance of rest and activity and healthy patterns of managing stress is a great place to start. Cruciferous vegetables are foundational to a healthy detox pattern in our bodies. Having healthy digestion with adequate fiber and consistent activity is also crucial for healthy detox and overall health. Start today with these and seeing food as fuel, rather than just to satisfy hunger. What you put into your body is important to the health of your cells and the systems that keep you moving.

5. To start again requires learning from the past

For a while it was difficult to reflect upon previous experiences because I was attempting to avoid facing areas where I felt inadequate and where I made mistakes. Whether it be from what others would think, or just my own expectations, I wanted to only think on the good achievements and progress. However, taking a moment to review and reflect makes space for learning from those experiences to improve and make better choices. It can be embarrassing when coming to terms with shortcomings and areas of missing the mark. This is especially true for those who aim higher and set high expectations for themselves. But at the end of the day, it is important to reflect more upon the truth of what God says. While shame can feel present and tangible, the mercy of God that comes when surrendering in the process is much greater and brings so much clarity. Considering Hebrews 12:1-2, we learn from Jesus's example that we have our own path to walk and that it is worth pursuing His purpose in us while despising the shame that comes with life experiences.

When the time comes to move forward, it is possible and vital to take inventory of what worked and what did not work, then focus on how to improve and the steps to reach our goals. A commonly known phrase that applies is 'those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.' The reality here is that unhealthy cycles can continue to repeat unless they are identified and broken. Instead of reliving the past, it is important to focus on what lies ahead, ever pursuing the holiness and sanctification that comes with knowing Christ (see Philippians 3:12-14).

Wherever you are in your health journey, take a moment today to reflect on where you have been. Write down the milestones, the symptoms, the mindsets and the setbacks. Then pray through the next step toward healing and freedom. I had to come to terms with the poor choices I made and the things I ignored that led to where I was. The promise in this process is that God will never leave you nor forsake you, and that His grace is there to empower you to choose wisely. Find someone to partner with you and hold you accountable. Find a tracker system to keep you in step with where you need to be.

Chapter 4

Actionable Steps Toward for Your Healing Journey

The patterns and cycles of illness and symptoms that we experience can be very similar and often resonate with one another because we are all living the human experience. However, we all have a unique path to our story and our unique make up requires a tailored approach. I have provided practical guides below to get you started on your journey with what I have learned and how I assist clients in health consultation and coaching. However, be sure to seek professional guidance for a personalized approach for you and your story.

Symptoms to Be Aware of (Most Common Reasons to Seek the Root Cause):

- **Gluten Sensitivity/Allergy** can be obvious or subtle. For me, it was more subtle. Below are some signs and symptoms to look for and provide clues that further investigation is needed. Testing with stool samples, such as with the GI Map, can identify if gluten is particularly harmful for your system. Symptoms may occur right away or be delayed from the time of ingestion:
 - Gastrointestinal distress such as bloating, gas, change in bowel habits
 - Generalized swelling in fingers/toes
 - Brain fog, fatigue, dizziness, equilibrium problems, headaches
 - Stubborn weight gain
 - Hormonal imbalances such as estrogen dominance
- **Gastrointestinal/Gut & Digestive Imbalances & Dysfunction** can also be obvious or subtle, and can be seen as common place because they occur in so many individuals. GI imbalance and digestive problems signal that something is wrong, and impact overall health, including toxin removal and brain health. The microbiome is 70% of our immune system, providing a robust defense when it is properly in balance. Many organs have important functions such as the liver and gallbladder for digestion. Stool testing, such as with the GI Map, is very beneficial in identifying sources of

inflammation, overgrowth of harmful bacteria in the gut and more. Below are common signs and symptoms to be aware of to seek root causes:

- Bloating, belching, gas after eating
- Abdominal pain/aches with hunger and/or after eating
- Constipation, diarrhea
- Heartburn/indigestion

Also see common disorders that can be addressed when seeking the root cause:

- Leaky gut, dysbiosis, inflammation, SIBO
 - IBS, Ulcerative colitis, constipation, diarrhea
 - Ulcers, GERD, diverticulosis, gallbladder issues
- **Hormonal Imbalance** such as low progesterone, elevated estrogen, low or elevated testosterone. With the wide use of pesticides, forever chemicals found in plastics and common products for hygiene and cleaning, plus consumption of processed foods and more, it is unfortunately common for men and women to experience infertility and other effects of imbalanced hormones. Below are the most common signs and symptoms that have become easy to cover up with medications, but provide signals that root causes need to be explored:
- Heavy menstrual cycles with clotting, pain, GI symptoms with cycles
 - Stubborn weight gain
 - Facial hair growth in women
 - Hair loss
 - Low libido, fatigue, insomnia
 - Fatigue, brain fog, memory issues
- **Thyroid Dysfunction** has become very common in many individuals. The thyroid is considered the 'mother gland' and regulates metabolism, affecting multiple systems in the body. More commonly identified is a thyroid that is low functioning, and may or may not involve autoimmunity, which is considered Hashimoto's disease. Just viewing the TSH lab is not sufficient in identifying thyroid dysfunction. Rather, testing for T3 and T4 and thyroid antibodies are needed when wanting to get the full picture of

thyroid health. Below are the most common signs and symptoms that signal it is time to check the thyroid:

- **Low acting:** fatigue, hair loss, weight gain, low motivation, depression, cold hands/feet (consistently)
- **Highly active:** weight loss, swollen neck (from thyroid gland), anxiety, elevated temperature
- **Metabolic Dysfunction and Insulin Resistance** is also a common issue in individuals and is very detrimental to the body. Insulin is a vital hormone for every cell of the body and has a significant connection with overall health, more than just diabetes. When the pattern of insulin resistance begins to develop, it can be difficult to notice because it is more subtle. Other than identifying the symptoms, checking fasting insulin, cholesterol panel and blood glucose help to signal a developing pattern that can be addressed. There are identifiers that signal it is time to research the pattern that can be reversed:
 - **Combination** of: Elevated blood pressure, abdominal weight gain, elevated triglycerides, elevated blood glucose and fasting insulin
- **General symptoms** such as fatigue, burnout, brain fog, mood disorders such as depression and anxiety, and others that are more difficult to pinpoint are very common and often dismissed when seeing most providers. However, these are also signals from the body that something is out of balance and requires more investigation, especially more than just another medication, resting or 'pushing through.' The bottom line is that if there are symptoms that are not adding up, or labs are looking 'normal,' yet something still feels off, then it is time to investigate the root cause.

Where You Can Start Today

If any of these symptoms resonate with you today, take heart in knowing that the first steps are simpler than they may seem. Though many of us struggle with change, it is the series of consistent healthy steps and small tweaks to routines that lead to lasting habits and wellness. Start with taking inventory of your daily eating and activity routines. Then, make small moves toward the following steps that you can start right away:

- Choose whole, unprocessed foods. This would include whole fruits and vegetables, nuts, seeds, and animal protein sources all made without chemicals. Most snacks that come in a bag or a box are chemically processed and do more harm than any good. Check the ingredients and be sure you know what you are putting into your body.
- Hydrate with filtered mineral water, half of your body weight in ounces. Prioritize water and reduce or avoid, if possible, any beverages with added sugars.
- Walk every day. Get 1-2 walks every day, at least 15 minutes each. Include cardio, but prioritize strength training as you exercise and follow a pattern that works for you that you enjoy.

Time to Seek the Root Cause with Health Consultation

Seeking the root cause of health concerns is vital for both prevention and finding resolve. It is crucial for those who feel healthy *and* for those who are actively going through health difficulties. As you have read through my story and the common symptoms, take inventory of your own health journey. Has your family dealt with health issues that you want to avoid? Are you living through health difficulties right now that you want to find answers to and tired of feeling unheard? Maybe you are just hoping to prevent illness and would like to know what unique steps you need to take to take charge of your health. That is what health consultation is here for.

Quick fixes feel cheaper and/or more affordable up front but cost more over time. In a rushed visit, there's no time to invest in your full story, such as daily habits, environment, food realities, or what you've already tried. It is common to get a pill for the symptom, which might help short-term but this rhythm does not address the root. Instead, the problem comes back, and you most likely will need another visit (leading to more time/money from being off work), and the cycle continues. Research shows, and practitioners agree, that shorter visits often lead to more prescriptions instead of real behavior or lifestyle shifts that truly make the difference. Small investments in understanding your health can break the cycle.

Health consultation is beneficial for many reasons:

- The longer visit (~60-90 minutes) affords the opportunity to review your full story and not feel rushed.

- Review of your health history and current situation with the whole-person perspective, rather than isolating symptoms.
 - Typical day routine, current environmental triggers, accessible and affordable food options, what has worked and what has not, to name a few.
 - Connecting the dots of symptoms and lifestyle for a full picture of what is going on.
- A plan that is co-created between you and your health consultant, with real results and no pressure to conform.
 - You will gain a greater understanding of what is happening with true evidence-based information that helps put the pieces together and equips you to take charge of your health.
 - You will receive recommendations for labs and tests that actually help and a personalized supplement and nutrition plan tailored to your situation, knowing the practical steps to take, rather than leaving with more questions than answers.
 - Follow up visits reinforce wellness habits and accountability that empowers you to maintain momentum.

Root Cause Consultation is a health consultation company that serves to provide the education, coaching and investigation that equips you to steward your health and find the answers you have been looking for while strengthening your faith. As your health consultant, I provide guidance to help you navigate your health journey with the expertise of being a nurse practitioner certified in functional medicine. See me in person in Quarryville, PA or with a virtual visit.

Are you ready to find your root cause and true wellness from the inside out?

Call **(717) 288-7522** or email **rachel.rootcause@gmail.com** today! With wellness programs, consultation visits and workshops, you have what you need to take steps toward lasting wellness. Learn more at: www.livetothrive.life.



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