

My Story 048

Since March 2007, Stitchlinks have been asking people to tell us their Story, and also asking whether knitting and stitching has been helpful to them.

All Stories are voluntarily offered and anonymity is guaranteed. Only once we have been given permission do we publish so that others can appreciate, take inspiration and draw comfort from them.

This booklet is one of a series that contains a small selection taken at random from the long list of Stories we have received. Each is reproduced as it was entered on the online survey form, with the only exception of taking out any way that individuals can be identified.

Read at your leisure and be fascinated, comforted, thrilled, encouraged and inspired.

You are not alone.

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Story 37

“Knitting is the only thing that calms me completely”

I sometimes have a lot of stress in my life, and I don't always handle it very well. I am impatient and quick to anger, and though I try to manage this with other strategies (visualizing calming things, thinking calming thoughts, thinking of something funny), knitting is the only thing that calms me completely. Everything else is a temporary remedy until I can knit.

I often have knitting with me, something small to work on while waiting in lines, or to take with me on my lunch hour. It has come in handy when there are delays in my commute (I take public transportation), and sometimes, it is fun to knit instead of read on my way home.

My work is very much about multitasking. I sometimes feel like I can't concentrate unless I have several tasks to juggle at once. When I sit down to knit, especially during lunch hours, I have to do an internal switching of gears in order to focus solely on knitting. It is refreshing to concentrate totally on just one thing, especially something that is creative. Knowing that this total focus leads to productivity helps me bring that level of concentration to other things.

Fear/anxiety and sometimes loneliness are part of the same set of feelings for me. For example, when my husband and I are separated, I worry that something bad will happen to one of us -- especially to him, and so the prospect of one of us having to go on a trip makes me fearful and anxious. If he has had to go somewhere, I spend as much time as I can knitting, to distract myself from my fears, and from missing him too much. Obviously, I do miss him, but I think it helps me to keep busy and not be consumed with missing him. The fear/anxiety take on an extra dimension when I am the one traveling. I recently developed a fear of flying, to the point of having an anxiety attack. Obviously, that was unpleasant in its own right, but it was also very uncomfortable for me, sitting on a plane and feeling so conspicuous (I had shortness of breath, my heart felt like it was racing, and then I started to cry). After that, I was determined that I would try to avoid another attack. The last time I flew, I was able to have my knitting on board, and even after I had to put it away for landing, I visualized myself knitting and repeated the stitch pattern in my head, and it kept me thoroughly calm through a bumpy landing.

Knitting has best helped me deal with grief. Last year, we had several deaths in our families: my uncle and two grandfathers, and my husband's grandmother. It was a difficult year to say the least. The one story that really stands out for me is the day the second grandfather died (six weeks after the first, and I think I still hadn't dealt with that one). I got the call at work, and took the rest of the day off. As soon as I sat down on the train, I started knitting - it was the only thing that kept me from crying on the way home -- I was totally incapable of reading. I felt like I had to keep it together until I was safely home. Once there, I felt like I could give my emotions free reign. After that, I spent almost all of my time knitting - I worked on a sock, made a purse from start to finish, and a hat and scarf set from start to finish. During that time, I feel like I channeled the grief into something creative and productive. I made the first steps toward peace with what had happened, and thought of both the good times with my grandfathers, and try to accept that it was their time to go. They had both lived long, full lives, and I was grateful for that.

Story 29

“...I was able to take myself away from what was going on ...

I am a knitter of over 50 yrs and work full time. I had not done any knitting for about 2 yrs, until October 2006. My husband had been mugged the Nov 2005 and it had been a knock on effect to me. I had always been able to cope with what life had thrown at me and just let things go over my head. That is till last year, when everything we had planned for, was gone, just like that.

The 3 men that attacked my husband, in such a horific manner, they could sleep at night, we were unable to do that. I managed to keep things to myself, not letting my husband get upset or worried about me, I cried in silence. That is till I was taken ill at work with an unrelated ailment and could no longer keep it in. I had purposely refrained from going to the G.P. because I knew I would not be able to hide it, but I had to go with the infection I had. I was unable to concentrate, communicate with anyone or even “keep house” I was a mess.

My saving grace was my second from eldest son and his partner. They had been waiting 6 yrs to become parents and at last it was happening. It had it's worries on top of all what we were going through to be told the baby was dead and the following week to confirm there was a heart beat? It was a roller coaster of emotions whilst also having problems in other areas of our family. Our youngest son's ex-girlfriend tried to commit suicide x 2 times and we had looked after her as a daughter for the past 3 yrs it was a shock to say the least.

I decided I needed to get some clothes knitted for the new Grandchild and went and sorted my patterns and wool out. I wasn't really in the mood but I persevered and slowly over the next 2 weeks or so I was able to take myself away from what was going on by concentrating for the first time in months. I knit from morning till night and have produced some lovely items all be it I haven't really been loving it as I would normally.

I do believe that without doing my knitting I would not be returning to work next month and would still be on medication of which I stopped taking about 6 weeks ago. I hope this helps with any research you are doing.”

Story 142

“Cross stitch has been my saviour...”

I am a 47 yr old lady who 8 years ago suffered a heart attack after a hysterectomy op caused a clot to form, this left me with a condition known as coronary artery spasm which gives angina typical pain which can become unstable so many trips into the local coronary care unit. I am managed these days on about 25 different tablets, oxygen therapy at home and I also suffer with asthma so have to have all the inhalers plus a nebulizer.

At the end of June last year 2006 I suffered a small stroke affecting the left hand side this was hard enough to bear but then 2 weeks later another one hit on the same side only worse. Cross stitch has been my saviour as I suffer with rheumatoid arthritis too this helps to keep my hands supple. Gradually and with a lot of frustration my cross stitching is coming back. It may only be 2 stitches a day or on a good one 2 hours worth. It helps me to relax to lose myself in the pattern or gift I am creating it takes my mind off all these problems which sometimes can be hard to bear. I have two girls aged 9 and 12 and they too stitch a little with me sometimes.

Through all my ups and downs I try to remain cheerful and positive but without my cross stitch I feel I would have gone under by now. When I am in hospital it is a talking point and you can make many friends. I also have two very close pen friends in Australia with little problems but we all cross stitch to keep sane. It somehow makes me feel good and releases a sense of wellbeing which helps with pain and frustration a lot of the time. There is so much I could tell you but it would take a book to fill it. If I can help in any other way or fill in any questions I would be happy to do so. My email is xxxxxxxxxx Kind regards and good luck with the research

Story 140

“The only thing that kept me going...”

When I first found out that I had fibromyalgia, I was home from work for about a month, dealing with the side effects of different treatments. The only thing that kept me going was knitting and cross stitching. It made the time sitting on the couch in pain go by so quickly.

Story 143

"..everytime I wanted to reach for a pain pill, I reached for my knitting instead..."

I was a teacher working with emotionally disturbed children when I was injured and became unable to work any longer at the ripe age of 36.

In the pain management program I went through they taught us that any creative art was helpful in managing stress, pain, and anxiety. One thing they also taught was that the act of learning something new so engrosses the mind that it lets go of the pain and other serious side effects of that pain. I started teaching myself to knit, everytime I wanted to reach for a pain pill, I reached for my knitting instead, and tried to teach myself a new stitch pattern BEFORE I would allow myself to take that pain pill. I have honed this process enough now that I can instantly place myself in that mindset, and now can use it whenever stitching-whether it be knitting, crochet, or my first time love, cross stitching. I do not feel I need to expound on the points others have so well pointed out, but I do feel the need to specify that after 5 years on the same narcotics, my intake has never gone up.

When tolerance becomes an issue, we switch my meds to another narcotic in the same dosage and after 2 weeks, I go back to the original medication that works best for me. This technique keeps me from falling into the "habit" of taking the pills whenever my mind says ouch" but also lets me be self aware to my bodies needs--if the pain becomes severe I can take the pills as needed. In the beginning of this technique I was surprised how often I would look up and say-"whew

I had held off until I was due for my 2nd dose--totally unaware that I had missed a whole dose and only found the pain to rise at the 2nd dosage due time. Any chronic pain patient will tell you this is a wonderful thing but more so than that--this allows me some measure of control when it comes to my medications and allows me to be an active participant in managing my pain and from there my health. And that is priceless!!! So often these things happen and you are forced into the role of the victim-totally at the whim and mercy of the health care providers

Telling Your Story helps others to appreciate their own circumstances. Please help by completing the survey at www.Stitchlinks.com