



The Personal Coach BULLETIN

balance through partnership

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COACHING POINT

TRYING TO STAY ALIVE JUST ONE MORE DAY

My old football teammate and friend Gord Sinclair at the Winnipeg Free Press, has been writing a number of stories about individuals and families in our community, who have and are enduring considerable hardship on a daily basis. In reading these compelling stories, I was reminded of what I learned a long time ago about a whole other world out in our community.

As some know and I do not often talk about it, I have had my own share of challenges over the last several years. In the fall of 2001, after being diagnosed with a lung infection that doctors were not able to eradicate with antibiotics because of an underlying chronic condition, I spent the better part of the next two years, my health slowly deteriorating as I gradually lost lung function. I was told early on that my only hope was a double lung transplant and without it, I would die! It wasn't until August of 2003, that I received a transplant at the 11th hour, in a 13 hour operation that took me another two years to gradually recover from. Since that time, I have led a normal life, really only having to deal with the side effects from immune suppressant drugs. I have been enjoying my big kids, I returned to work full-time as a personal coach and until December of 2007, the Winnipeg Rifles Junior Football Club, co-founded by myself and George Depres Jr. in 1999.

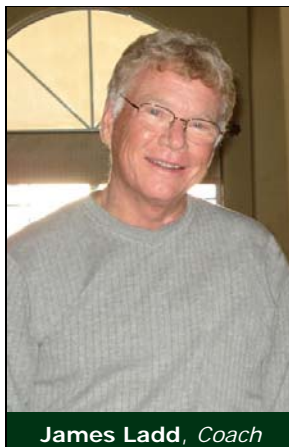
Recently, I had to face a new challenge in the form of skin cancer, a direct result of immune suppression, which is necessary to keep my lungs functioning. I went under the knife to have it removed and am happy to report that I received a clean bill of health from the marvelous doctors at Cancer Care Manitoba. Their message to me; "be vigilant."

Now I am not asking you for sympathy.....well okay, maybe just a little bit, but just a little. Really, why I decided to write about these very personal life experiences was to make a point, a point about another part of life that most try not to think about if they can avoid it.

There is a whole other world out there made up of 1000's, yes 1000's of people in our community, who are dealing with debilitating chronic illness on a day-to-day basis, huge numbers of these remarkable human beings spend each day doing only one thing; "trying to stay alive just one more day." I became a part of this culture for almost four years and since then continue to recall and relive many of those experiences, and still occasionally in the form of post-traumatic stress, although it has faded considerably over the years. Even now on my periodic follow-up visits to the transplant program, I am reminded of the incredible stories of survival that continue to play out as I pass through the Rehab Centre.

During the last four months leading up to my transplant, I had become so ill that I was no longer able to care for myself at home even with the help of home care, and became a permanent resident of the Riverview Health Centre.

Continued next page.....



James Ladd, Coach

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If you are interested in investigating the possibility of having your own personal coach, please contact me for a one hour exploratory session at no charge!
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I had lost 53 pounds, was now just skin and bone, on 6 liters of oxygen 24 hours a day, unable to walk without assistance and was receiving three powerful antibiotics intravenously to slow the infection as I waited and hoped for a donor match.

In spite of this ordeal, I met and became friends with some amazingly brave human beings, as we all struggled to survive each day. I watched them slowly die without any hope or possibility of recovery. And as each one of them died, some of my hope for my own survival died with them.

A 20 year old young man, on a respirator, paralyzed from the neck down as a result of the West Nile virus struggling to hold on.

A beautiful woman my age with pulmonary fibrosis waited for a lung transplant that never came.

A fireman who over a lifetime of dedication to the fire department and his community lost his lungs.

A 28 year old man, with a young family, dying of an inoperable tumor in his lung because he worked as a welder without knowing he should have worn breathing apparatus.

A wife and her husband, her slowly dying of Muscular Dystrophy, on a respirator, unable to speak or move her entire body but for her small finger and him there by her side each and every single day, to tenderly care for her.

Room does not allow for more but believe me when I say there were so many more, it breaks my heart thinking back. So many heart wrenching stories and they continue to be written.

Their struggle was my struggle and having survived the experience was transformed in so many ways as I continue to carry their memories and example of courage with me every day.

If I may ask a favour of each of you.....tomorrow morning on your way to work, step outside of your world just for a few moments and think of these incredibly courageous human beings, see them in their struggle, some may even be family or friends, and say a prayer for them that their journey will be peaceful and reasonably pain free. Perhaps even show the courage to reach out to share their journey with them by being by their side. It will likely make it just that much more bearable if they can feel your love. And you will be surprised at what it does for you in return. "Be a true hero!"

And maybe just maybe, if you are generous enough, give people hope and the gift of life, sign the donor card when you renew your drivers license. Let your family know your wishes. Some would have a second chance at life with an organ transplant as I have had. There are so many waiting and quietly suffering, calling out to you for your love. Listen closely, can you hear them? ~James Ladd

Footnote

August 16th will be the fifth anniversary since receiving my transplant. It has been an amazing journey and I look forward to many more years. I love life and all that it offers and I always remember what Scott Peck said in his book; The Road Less Traveled; "life is difficult," but once you accept that it is difficult, you transcend it and it no longer seems so! Take care of your life.

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