

News



MY JOURNEY THROUGH STROKE RECOVERY

By Tammie Raatz

June 2006

The year was 1987 and I was enjoying life as a single 29 year-old woman working as an office manager by day and attending graduate school in the evenings. I had been experiencing headaches for about a month and a recent physical had revealed that I had slightly elevated blood pressure – all attributed to a busy lifestyle. In July, 1987, I was on a camping vacation in Wyoming - swimming, water-skiing, etc. when I began to feel really weak. I felt a pop in my head and immediately began to lose the vision in my right eye. Then, I slowly felt the life drain from the right side of my body.

The medical staff at the ranger station quickly diagnosed a serious condition and I was taken by ambulance (two-hour journey) to Casper, Wyoming, where tests revealed that I had had a stroke. Once I was back in Colorado I quickly began the regiment of physical, occupational and speech therapy. It didn't take long for me to realize that the pain medication for my headaches made me too groggy to do my exercises, practice my speech, etc., so within two weeks of my stroke I began have acupuncture treatments for my headaches. That is where my work with alternative medicine really began.

For the last 19 years I have used alternative medicine in conjunction with traditional western medicine to enhance my recovery. The lack of energy and the disconnection with the right half of my body is what has kept me involved with acupuncture and led me to Tai Ye. It is really hard to describe what it is like to not feel your right foot or right hand (and everything in-between!) I have broken bones in my right foot twice because I stood up too fast and didn't take the time to make sure that my foot was planted squarely on the ground. Tai Ye has helped to take the tingling (and pinching) feeling out of my hand and most importantly has helped me to feel like one whole person, not two halves.

My right side is usually cold and my fingers a little off-color. With Tai Ye I can actually feel my fingers relax and the blood running through my veins on the right side. While it is true that the sensation doesn't last more than an hour or two –it does amazing things for my energy level and my resolve to continue to keep using my hand to the best of my ability. I would have a treatment every single day if insurance would help defray the costs! It gives me hope that I can continue to be a fully functioning, independent woman with a career and family.

I married the boyfriend that was with me when I had my stroke. We just celebrated our 17th anniversary; we became foster parents and then adopted 2 children who are 12 and 13 now. Early on in my recovery I knew that I would never be “normal” again. But, I have found a “new normal” and I wake up happy every day because I am not a stroke victim, I am a stroke survivor.