

IMLA'S TB STORY: FINDING FAITH AMONG UNCERTAINTY

“As a fitness trainer, I was probably more focused on my mind and body than most. But that all changed in just eight months. I went from cycling 20 miles a day to needing a walking stick. Looking back, the mental challenge of my illness was just as exhausting as the physical one.”

The first thing I noticed was feeling tired. I was going to the gym every day, but it was making me weaker. It didn't make any sense. When I first went to the doctors, they treated me for the flu. I just kept getting more tired. By my third visit, I couldn't ride a bike on a flat road without getting exhausted. Luckily, I saw a different doctor who decided to send me for x-rays. That's when they found a shadow on my right lung. It wasn't long before I was passing blood and blacking out. I had lost a lot of weight and needed a walking stick.

Not knowing what was wrong with me was difficult. I kept ignoring how sick I was and tried to convince everyone around me that I was normal. There was too much confusion. I could see my body was shutting down, but nobody could tell me what was wrong. When I tried to tell people I was sick, I didn't know what to say. I even started to think it was all in my head.

The medical staff who helped me during all of this were great. Without them, I wouldn't be here. I was under the care of two hospitals and spent more time there than at home. I was being weighed weekly, having lots of blood tests, and a nurse visited me every day. That's when I started to get really worried.



They went through a process of elimination until they decided I had lymphatic cancer. By this stage, I was dying. I was even on the terminally ill ward. It was only when they opened me up and took out some of my lymph nodes that they discovered the truth. When I came around the next day, the doctor said, "You have TB."

There was a huge sense of relief knowing that what I had was curable, but I had concerns about the treatment. I decided I wasn't going to get any better if I didn't take it. On top of the medication, I meditated every day, went on a vegan diet, and did a lot of spiritual work and complementary therapies. It took eight months to find out what was wrong with me and eight months to complete the treatment.

Looking back, it was a physical and psychological battle that I had to fight. Knowing what you are fighting is half the battle. I was lucky because I'm really into the spiritual side of life, so I really immersed myself in it. That's what kept me going. I think you need to find something to keep you going because it can sometimes feel too easy to quit.