

THIS IS MY STORY:

My name is, Meranda Varnado, I am 42 years old. I am about to tell you a story that changed my life.

Approximately six years ago, I was diagnosed with an immune system dysfunction known as Fibromyalgia. Fibromyalgia is a condition commonly associated with widespread chronic pain, fatigue, memory problems and mood changes. I became totally disabled from my career, social life, family and friends. I could not understand what was happening to my mind, body and spirit. I was angry with God and anybody who did not understand me. I was very active for a 35 year-old. I could do anything an 18-year old could do - and do it better. I was teaching aerobics, Pilates, and training for martial arts. I was also studying for my massage therapy license and working for an insurance company.

Three days after I graduated from massage therapy school in June of 2002, I came down with a fever. The doctors did not know what was wrong. Eventually, I got better and started back with my normal life. Then a year later, I will never forget that day, I started feeling tired, having terrible headaches, muscle fatigue, and I could not put a complete sentence together. I was going to work everyday feeling out of my mind from holding all of these feelings inside. I was still trying to teach my aerobic classes because I could not let my students down. The pain was unbearable and I decided to go see a sports doctor.

He told me to cut back on my aerobic classes and gave me a prescription for inflammation, which irritated my stomach. I could barely raise my leg because it was so swollen, could not sleep, barely had an appetite and had lost 12 pounds in one month - I was already a size 4. Soon, I could step into my size 4's with them already zipped and buttoned. Then my fingers started to swell. I called my sports doctor and told him I was not getting any better that I was hurting all over and I could not sleep and could barely sit at work. He told me to take Aleve and faxed over a note to my boss to put me on sedentary duties. What was going on?

I made an appointment with my primary care doctor. She did blood work, checked my thyroid, gave me Zoloft and Celebrax, and told me that I needed to go to church, because it was all in my head. I could not believe what she was telling me. I have been in church from the time I popped out of my mother's womb. I am a preacher's kid. She told me the same thing like the sports doctor, "If your symptoms worsen call me, but in the meantime I'll see you in two weeks." Yeah, right! I did not go back.

I went to see a muscle, bones, and joint doctor. He put me on Flexeril and increased my Zoloft. He took x-rays of my lower and upper extremities and found nothing, but told me to come back in two weeks. I went to a neurologist, he found nothing told me to come back in two weeks and gave me a script for Ametripline. I went to a neuromuscular surgeon he checked my entire skeletal system and found nothing, I went to a dermatologist, because my skin started breaking out. I even went to my ob/gyn, because I started breaking out with blisters on my buttocks and had a bad yeast infection; she wrote me a script it and cleared up. I called my neurologist to find out what was my next alternative; he referred me to a rheumatologist. The rheumatologist increased my medication and referred me to a physical therapist, by this time I was taking 200mg of

Zoloft, crunching four Flexeril in the morning four at night and taking Miraprix. Then I found out that Miraprix was a drug you give people who have tremors from Parkinson's disease. I started fainting, could not hold a full time job, could barely bathe myself, comb my hair or shave my legs. I was having flu-like symptoms and constipation. I finally said the hell with it!

It is three months later, my health is still declining and my doctor did not want to listen to me. He just kept increasing my medications, so I started researching on the internet about Fibromyalgia and I came across a doctor by the name of Dr. Paul St. Armand. He has been studying Fibromyalgia since the 60's. I tried sharing this information with my rheumatologist and he said, "Oh, no! I do not want to see that. You just need to increase your medication and keep seeing me every two weeks." Now I was really upset. I was the youngest patient he was seeing, so if he was telling me this nonsense I can imagine what he was telling his older patients.

Now it is 2004, I have lost my job, am on food stamps and unemployment insurance. One day I was watching television, the Wayne Brady show. One of his guests was Jack LaLane, and it was his 90th birthday. I was feeling so depressed I was thinking about committing suicide because I was in so much pain. I had completely stopped taking my medication and going to the physical therapist, because nothing was working. Jack LaLane was talking about life. He said the key to life is to keep moving and how doctors had told him years ago that exercise and strength training would never work. Now, he has outlived all of the doctors who'd told him that! Ding, Ding! I had an epiphany. I said to myself, "You know what to do."

I then started by rehabbing myself with water aerobics and designed a chair aerobics routine for people with arthritis and overall health issues. However, I was still feeling fatigued and having pain. Sitting in the house just was not getting it. I decided to go out, thinking it would make me feel better just to hang out with family and friends. Why did I do that? I passed out in public on Mardi Gras Day. I was standing there listening to a high school band. It was February 2005, about 78 degrees and humid. I started to get overheated so I started by taking off my shoes, then I unbuttoned my jeans, and then off came my shirt and bam! I hit the pavement. People around me started throwing beads and screaming, "Yeah baby, take it off." My friends realized what was going on and tried to revive me. I could remember was this cool splash of water hitting the back of my throat and face. A kind woman saw what was happening and had run over to help. I thank God for that cold bottle of water. I never got her name, but I looked at her in a daze and said thank you. I was not drunk; my system just could not handle the drugs my doctor was prescribing to me.

I should have known better, coming from a healthy household and with my training as a certified fitness specialist. I had just thought some doctor would know how to get a handle on my condition. Wrong! Then, one day I went to visit a dear friend of mine. He asked me, "What was going on?" that I looked so exhausted and out of my mind. I told him that I felt like killing myself. I did not know if I was coming or going. He told me about a holistic doctor that practices complimentary medicine and gave his number. I called and made an appointment to see this doctor. It has now been a year I was going through all this madness. I can call to mind when I went to see this doctor my hair wasn't combed, my

legs weren't shaved, my clothes were barely fitting me, but I did take a shower and brushed my teeth. The nurse called me in the back, took my vital signs and showed me to the examination room. In walked this tall good-looking Afro-American doctor. I had imagined he was white, because of his name, Dr. Jimmy Carter.

Dr. Carter spent over two hours talking with me and probing every part of my body. Before I left, he asked, "What is your blood type?" I told him O-positive and he wrote on his note-pad, turned to me, and said this is not in your head you have what is known as CFS and Immune Dysfunction, along with Fibromyalgia. He said Miranda, "What your problem is that you was always putting others before yourself and not paying attention to your own needs." I started crying, because what he was saying was the truth and we all know the truth hurts. Dr. Carter told me he was going to put me on Dr. Paul St. Armand's protocol. That is right, he said Dr. St. Armand, the same doctor I had pulled up on the internet about six months ago, the information that I tried to share with my rheumatologist. Dr. Carter then said, "I am going to give you an IV mineral drip and put you into an oxygen room, then give you a B-12 shot. I will see you in two weeks and get you a colon cleansing. To put something good into your body you have to clean out the bad."

As I left his office, I looked up to the sky and said thank you Jesus. When I went back for the hydrotherapy cleanse, I felt such relief that an indescribable calmness came over me. He gave me some herbs called seven flowers that helped me sleep and helped my anxiety attacks. That night I slept like a newborn baby. The next morning I noticed a big difference. I could stand without my feet hurting and felt much less muscle stiffness. I started jumping up and down and screaming and crying saying, "Thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus!"

It is now May 2005 and I feel great! No more pain, no more fatigue, I can lift my arms above my head and shave my legs. I attended Jazz Fest, had my first drink and danced well into the night. I started working for a home health care agency and I started sharing my story and exercise program with seniors and letting them know you have the right to question your doctor and if he doesn't tell you what you want to hear go get a second opinion, or bring someone with you that can ask those questions for you. You see; God puts people in your life for a reason, a place, a time and a season. I only had to see Dr. Carter twice and within 3-months, my life had changed. Now it is 2007 and I have my life back. I am teaching chair aerobics in the day and step aerobics at night. That's right - I can jump around and move. I have started my business and the name of my business is called Move Baby, Move! Because you owe it to yourself to feel the best you can feel and be the best you can be. Free from disease, free from stress, lean, strong and healthy: Move Baby, Move! I am taking my supplements, eating according to my blood type, and exercising. I finally got my life back! Sometimes I have to slow down because I get this natural high and might burn myself out. However, I manage to get back on track. That is why I have to tell my story. Because I feel that God choose me to carry on this mission to help women like me to take control of their life and believe a change has come.

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