

“Me and My Migraine”

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My name is Gobnait Lucey and I am a migraine sufferer. I would like to introduce you to my migraine experience.

“Mr. Migraine” has been with me now for over thirty years. He tells me where I can go, how long I can go there and how long I can stay. He has total power over me.

To be honest I can't actually remember when I first started getting migraine, although I jokingly tell people it started shortly after I got married!. There's no connection really. Migraine really began to take over my life shortly after I had my first child. That child is now grown up and occasionally suffers severe migraine. She rings me up and says: “Thanks Mam.”

I used to describe migraine to my children as an alien clumped to the side of my head. A red-hot tongue twisting in behind my right eye. At other times I got the whack on the back of the head version where it felt like someone was banging my head off a brick wall.

When it hits, my Mr Migraine is unforgiving and unrelenting. There is no let up in the pain. I lie there in the obligatory dark room and I cannot sleep. If I move my head it hurts - if I don't move my head it hurts. Tears pour down my face and I don't even realise I am crying out loud until one of my children or my husband comes to see what they can do. But of course there is nothing I can do. I lie there and wonder what kind of thing I have done that God wants to make me lay there and suffer like this.

I have had a few scary occasions when I got an insight into the mind of a suicide victim. Because of times of excruciating pain and seemingly insistent torment, I too have seen the logic of ending my own life. My children would be ok, they would have a good father to take care of them. My husband would have five wonderful children to comfort him. Me, I would have no more pain. One evening I recall asking my husband to sit with me until I fell asleep because I feared I would find some way to end my life. That really frightened me and it must have frightened him too.

Things that I have learned from migraine:

Migraine is very sneaky. Sometimes it comes in the dead of night when I am having a nice sleep. Suddenly I wake up with migraine. By which time it is too late to take Zomig, my preferred medical remedy of choice at the moment.

Migraine has no conscience, it doesn't care whose day it is going to ruin. Four years ago my first daughter got married and Mr. Migraine decided to gatecrash. He certainly wasn't invited. I spent most of that day sneaking up to the hotel room to lie down with a cold face cloth placed against the side of my head. After a brief period of respite I would then make my way back with a fake smile on my face. I didn't want my daughter's day ruined by my pain. Thankfully she didn't find out until afterwards.

I often find that it is not when I am stressed but when I am relaxed that my migraine attacks occur. Many years ago when my children were very young and my mother who suffered with Alzheimer's was living with us, my husband had to work away from home and only got back at weekends. But every Friday just at the time he arrived, I got a migraine. The poor man must have thought he was the cause of it! I believe it was when I was able to let my defences down and let somebody else take care of my young family and ailing mother that Mr. Migraine decided to strike.

I hate the fact that because of migraine I have become addicted to Solpadeine. I know I am addicted because I cannot go a single day without at least four tablets. Although this is down from a figure of 9 or 10. This is hard for me to admit to you all because I don't like not being in control of my life. Now not only do I have migraine to control me, but Solpadeine as well. This addiction crept up on me so slowly over the years that I hardly noticed that I was increasing the intake. I now have to suffer not only the daily headaches but the rebound headache as well which is a direct consequence of overusing painkillers. This pain is somewhat like a "baby migraine" but I can tell the difference. I am now making some progress in curing my Solpadeine addiction thanks to the help of my doctor and the website www.solpadeinehelp.org.uk.

I hate it so much when I tell somebody I have migraine and they dismiss it with: "Oh I get headaches too. I just take a Paracetamol and it's gone." That's a headache, not a migraine! At times of despair I think what's the point and why not just give in. Give up taking the Solpadeine.... I hardly ever take advice and I can't be bothered keeping a migraine diary... I got but never kept the follow up appointment with Dr O'Sullivan...

The good news however is that the usual bits work for me now. I make sure I get enough sleep. No long fasts, reduced stress. No chocolate, I never drank red wine or ate cheese, so that's not a problem. Zomig is very effective if used properly. Its expensive but keeps my migraine at bay. I'm not sure if other people here have found chiropractic adjustments to be helpful with alleviating migraine or pre-conceived attack but apparently a lot of research has been carried out in this field and results have been encouraging. On my part, I can only tell you that since I started attending my chiropractic doctor in Ballincollig, I have not had a single bad attack of migraine. It may not be a miracle cure and it may not work for everybody but as a migraine sufferer for over 30 years I am happy to pass this snippet of information on.

Finally, I would encourage you to take comfort from the fact that you are not alone and that we can all learn from each other.