

GET INSPIRED

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A MENDED MIND PENS AGAIN

Ten years ago, the firm ground I'd once stood on crumbled with the diagnosis of a life-threatening meningioma brain tumor. A baseball sized tumor that should have already put me in a coma. A tumor my body somehow harbored for years unbeknownst to me.

By Liz Holzemer

It wasn't my time yet. I survived two craniotomies. I was spared the physical deficits I was forewarned I would likely have--blindness and paralysis. I got off lucky with the invisible ones I suffer from--epilepsy, chronic fatigue and facial neuralgia. I proved doctors wrong when I had not one, but two miracle children, Hannah, 8 and Hunter, 6.

If I even survived brain surgery, my greatest concern was what would happen if my neurosurgeon accidentally scraped away one too many neurons or tampered with the part of my brain that gave me the ability to write, be creative, be me.

Recovery was sheer hell as I was forced to relinquish my type A personality and gradually build up my strength again. A daily lap around my cul-de-sac or tackling a flight of stairs proved taxing and frustrating to a body that once hiked and bench pressed.

But it was more than the physical. I struggled with words I knew how to spell. I lost my ability to focus. Words, regardless of their font or color, assaulted my senses. They glared up at me from ink-stained pages, daring me to absorb them and contemplate their meanings, implied or not.

I needed to prove I could commit my thoughts and ideas to paper. I forced myself to return to the rudimentary basics of writing--free journaling--to release my recovery frustrations and hopefully recapture a glimpse of my old writing style. I also began a gratitude journal, even though I didn't feel mustering up the energy to take a shower merited an entry.

It took months, but as my stamina gradually returned so did my grip on crafting the stories I previously enjoyed penning. Sparks of creativity reignited. And rather than lament the loss of the style of writing I was once familiar with, I came to terms with how my brain tumor had given me a new voice. A voice that has steered a new direction in my writing. My reshifted thinking has resulted in my becoming a local bestselling published author and most recently, an inspirational columnist.

Not too shabby for someone who's had her noggin' carved into a few times.

Liz Holzemer is the author of Curveball: When Life Throws You A Brain Tumor and founder of the non-profit Meningioma Mommas (meningiomamommas.org). For more information on Liz, visit lizholzemer.com or email her at info@lizholzemer.com.

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