



Pain: I Get It - Kat's Story



Kat still lives with pain, but she tells us how she no longer suffers and what it took to get there

I felt scared, and alone. I was in so much pain, and I didn't understand why.

I was waiting for my next medical appointment, anticipating another quick visit where another nice doctor wouldn't have any new answers. I was terrified that I would end up disabled or dead in the meantime. I wanted the pain to stop, but more than anything I just wanted to understand what was happening to me. Why could no one figure it out?

As most people do, I'd spent a lot of time searching for explanations and information online. But then I found something new: a website that explained the science of pain in a way I could understand.

Suddenly science was telling me that my pain was real and that some of the weird things I was experiencing actually made perfect sense!

I learned that normally, pain is protective - it can teach me things like 'stoves are hot' and 'don't walk barefoot on broken glass'. For some of us, though, pain can become overprotective, and our bodies are trying to shield us from a danger that isn't really there. I learned that persistent pain doesn't mean there is damage occurring in my body, just that my brain is interpreting something as dangerous. Sometimes it gets it wrong.

I figured that if hurt doesn't equal harm, then I don't need to worry in the same way.

I also learned that I hurt more when I'm tired or stressed. Not because I'm weak, but because of real biological changes that happen. The fact that my pain was lasting so long wasn't because something was seriously wrong, but because that's what can happen with bodies once persistent pain changes a nervous system. I learned that it's safe to move and once I did that, I learned that movement can actually make me feel better.

Seeing science explain my experience completely flipped my world upside down. Pain is way more complex than I realised, but that's a good thing. It means there are lots of things I can do to feel better, and most of them are completely within my control. I can actually train my brain to be less protective, and my body to hurt less.

I still see medical professionals on a regular basis to help me deal with a fairly complex disease. I still live with discomfort every day. But I no longer live with the fear that caused so much of my suffering. And I didn't need to change doctors or medication, haven't needed another surgery or more nerve blocks to live well.

What I needed more than anything was knowledge and understanding.

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