



Never give up, get well

Interview with Kansas Leader, Yvonne Keeny

Yvonne Keeny named her support group *Getting Well* for good reason. She walks the talk of holistic living as one way to deal with fibromyalgia (FMS). In an interview by Margy Squires, whom Yvonne met several years ago at one of her Fibromyalgia Coalition International (FCI) conferences, Yvonne shares how she continues to help others with FMS and ME/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome to never give up but to 'get well'.

What prompted you to start a support group?

FMS sufferers are often misunderstood, misdiagnosed, misinformed and misled. We are also often overmedicated and undernourished, caught in the revolving door of today's healthcare system with no place to turn. For more than 13 years I tried pain pills, muscle relaxants, antidepressants, etc., to control my FMS pain and multiple symptoms.

One day I picked up a *Physician's Desk Reference Guide*. Finding stroke listed as a possible side effect of one of my medications I burst into tears. There had to be a better way to fight this illness without life threatening side effects! By enlisting knowledgeable healthcare providers and self-help techniques, I've been well since 1997. In 1998, I started the Getting Well support group to offer hope and help to FMS and ME/CFS sufferers.

What's the first step for the newly diagnosed?

We strongly encourage FMS and ME/CFS sufferers to be proactive in their treatment process rather than just trying to mask symptoms. Find a holistic healthcare provider and a positive support group. If there is not a group in your area, consider starting one.

Any advice for a new support group leader?

Get as many like-minded people as possible to help you. People will support what they help create.

What is one accomplishment that you are especially proud of as a leader?

There is nothing more satisfying than hearing from former FMS and ME/CFS sufferers who have their life back.

How does FCI help support group leaders?

We provide information, support and resources for leaders including a guide and other literature. We also publish *Fibromyalgia Solutions* magazine for FCI members, a support group newsletter and post support group info on our website.

To be added, email group name, meeting location including city and state, day and time of meeting, and contact name to info@fibrocoalition.org.

What advice would you give today knowing what you do about FMS?

Proper diet and nutrition are as important as what the doctor can do for you. Don't go it alone; get support from people who are well or at least are working on it. Don't listen to the naysayers. Just because they haven't gotten well doesn't mean you can't.

What lifestyle changes did you make to help your FMS symptoms?

I started eating organic meats, fresh fruit and vegetables, drinking herbal teas, and avoiding processed food. I also avoid monosodium glutamate (MSG), refined sugar, aspartame, carbonated beverages, non-organic coffee, alcohol, wheat, and dairy products except organic butter and eggs. (Being pain free is worth it!)

In addition to a good multivitamin, I took probiotics, digestive enzymes, magnesium with malic acid, glucosamine, ginkgo biloba, antioxidants, 5-HTP and sleep formulas.

Any final comments to share?

Never, never, never give up! The FCI is here to help.



Yvonne Keeny, is the founder and executive director of FCI, a nonprofit organization in Mission, Kansas, hosts an annual FMS and ME/CFS Awareness Conference and Run/Walk. Yvonne is also editor of Fibromyalgia Solutions magazine and still leads the support group. For more information, visit www.fibrocoalition.org.

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