

Path from Surviving to Thriving




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Survival can be summed
up in three words, never
give up. That's the heart
of it really. Just keep
trying.

Bear Grylls

Jennifer Brea

Myalgic Encephalitis or Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (12:38)



- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fb3yp4uJhq0>

Chronic Illness Workbook

- Patricia Fennell, MSW, LCSW created a workbook on Chronic Illness Exercises found below:
 - <https://albanyhealthmanagement.com/workbook/forms/ChronicIllnessWorkbookExercises.pdf>
- Phases of Chronic Illness helps to understand where you might be in the process of recovery and thriving.

“Healing takes courage, and we all have courage, even if we have to dig a little a little to find it..”
- Tori Amos



Phase One: Crisis Phase

- **Characterized by crisis and chaos**
- **Actual onset of your illness**
- **Seek a medical diagnosis and treatment**
- **Seek help through spiritual practices**
- **Seek mental health care supports**
- **Use of drugs/alcohol to cope**
- **Task is to deal with the immediate trauma of the new illness**



Phase Two Stabilization

- Reached the limit of symptoms
- Symptoms are familiar
- Think that you're getting a little better
- Still experiencing chaos/relapses
- Trying to behave like before
- Relapses feel like personal failures
- Task of phase two is to begin to stabilize and restructure your life

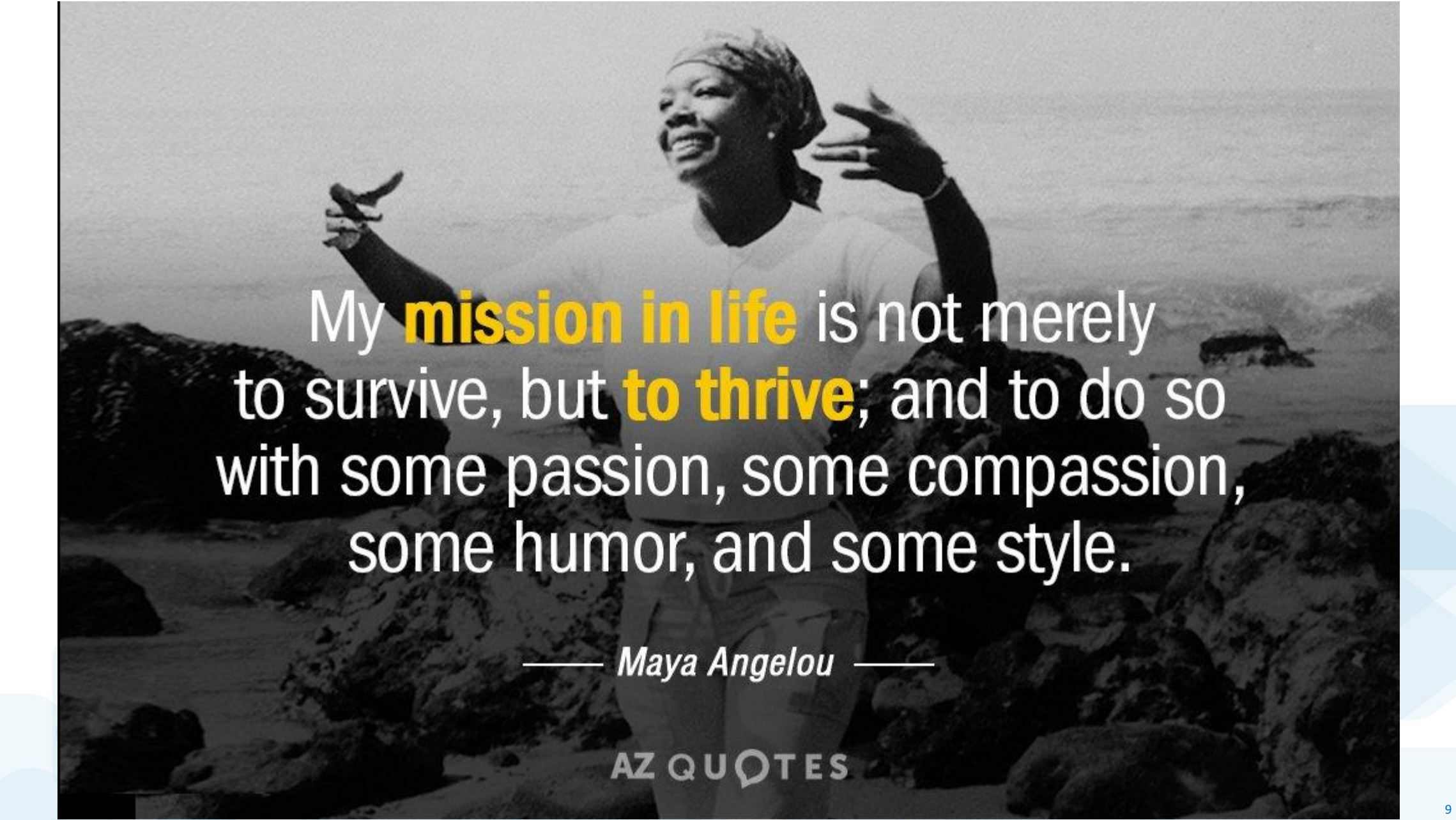


Phase Three Resolution

- **Learned how your illness behaves and how the world responds to it**
 - Attending the Long COVID group support is a way to learn
- **Acceptance of not being the person that you used to be before illness**
- **“Dark night of the soul.” when you feel the loss of your previous life.**
 - Resolution of the stages of Grief and Loss
 1. Denial-refusing to accept limitations
 2. Anger- towards others, doctors, family, self
 3. Bargaining- “if only I had...”, “I should have...They should have...”
 4. Acceptance- the realization of a new way of living with purpose and meaning
 - Viktor Frankl a Man’s Search for Meaning
- **Task during phase three is to develop a new, authentic self and meaning in life**

Four Phase Approach

- **Integrate your old self in wellness with the person you are now with Long COVID**
- **Tasks**
 - To continue to find ways to express your new “personal best”
 - To reintegrate or form new supportive networks of family and friends
 - To find vocation, work, volunteer or any other activity to contribute within your capabilities
 - As a psychologist working with patients who had severe developmental disabilities
 - To locate your illness experience within a larger philosophical or spiritual view
- **In total integration, you arrive at a new, whole, complete life, of which illness is only one part, even if it is an important part**
 - **Viktor Frankl explaining the need for meaning in life:**
 - <https://youtu.be/ID09bO0Ht00>



My **mission in life** is not merely to survive, but **to thrive**; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style.

— *Maya Angelou* —

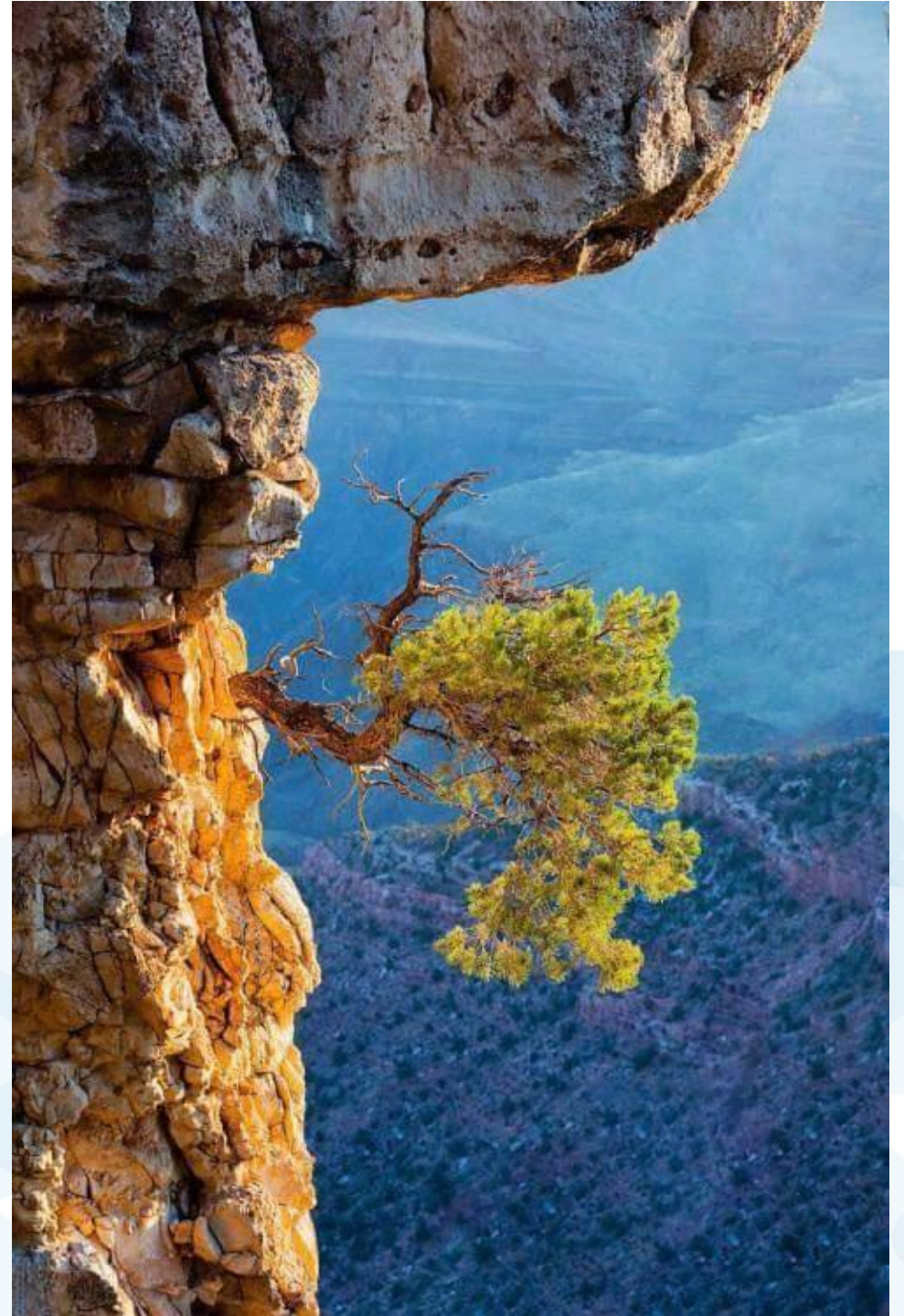
AZ QUOTES

Definition of THRIVING

Thriving thriv·ing 'thrī-vin : characterized by success or prosperity *thriving in life*

Psychological Flexibility

- Psychological flexibility is defined as the ability to distance from current mindsets and consider other possible mindsets (Kashdan, 2010)
- What is happening right now, free of judgment, and to respond in a way that moves us forward rather than getting stuck in the moment
 - anger, frustration, sadness, pain and so forth



Be the Thinker, Not the Thought

- **Constantly running commentary of thoughts in our mind**
- **Inner voice (depression, anxiety) is critical, judgmental cruel**
 - Tend to listen to it way too much
- **Automatically believe it and drives our emotions and behaviors**
- **Increasing your awareness of the thoughts you are having, being more observant of your own thought processes**
- **Watch your thoughts like a sporting event or movie**
- **It's one thing to think 'I am a burden' but an entirely different thing to notice yourself having the thought that you are a burden**
- **You are not your thoughts, let them go and move forward**
- **Are all your thoughts real? If you thought of a pink elephant will there be one?**



Open to Acceptance of Long COVID

- **When hearing the term ‘acceptance’, suck it up, deal with it**
 - Sucking it up and not complaining is the opposite of acceptance
 - Denying your experience, stifling your natural reactions and avoiding reality is not acceptance
 - “The path out of hell is through misery. By refusing to accept the misery that is part of climbing out of hell, you fall back into hell.”
- **Recognizing little to no control over Long COVID helps to stop struggling**
- **Validating your experience helps to honestly assess your condition**
- **Allowing yourself to feel what you’re feeling can help you to move through it instead of repressing it**
- **Do you accept your current experience?**

"I AM READY TO FACE ANY
CHALLENGES THAT MIGHT
BE FOOLISH ENOUGH TO
FACE ME"

-DWIGHT



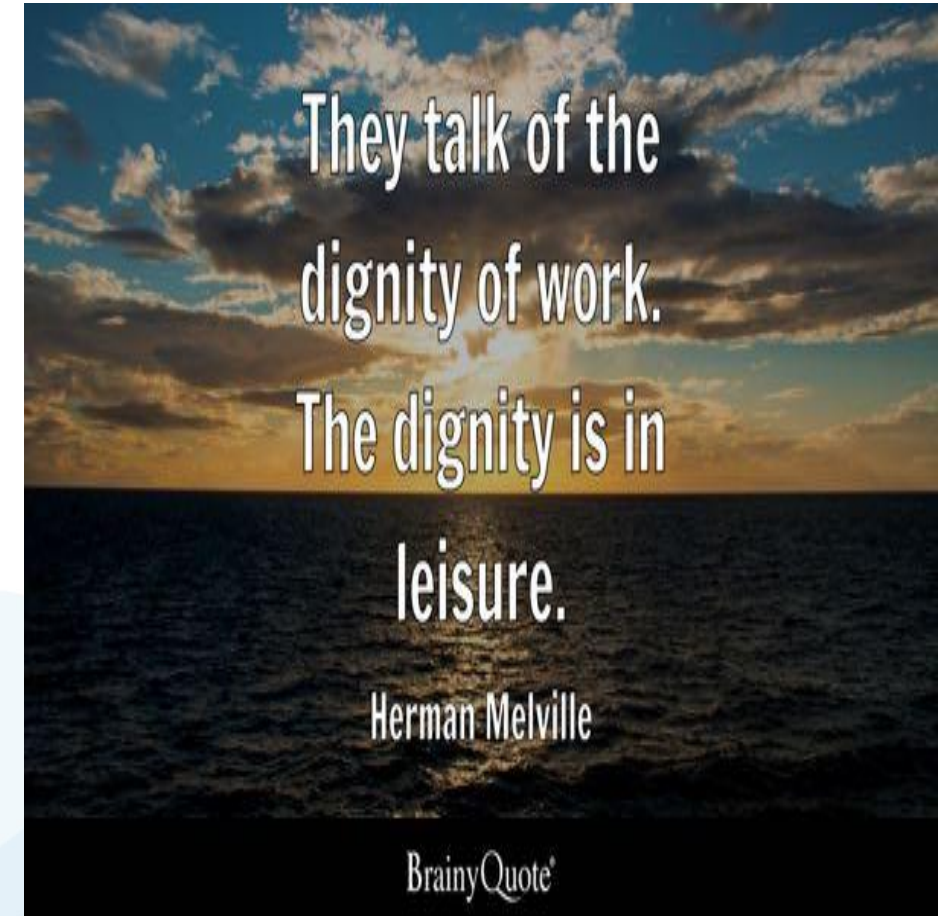
- **Spending all of one's time and energy trying not to feel a certain way, or "trying to change a currently unchangeable situation, is a fantastically inefficient and ineffective way to move through life."**

Staying Present

- **Paying close attention only to what's happening in this very moment**
- **Minds do not allow for being present easily**
- **Always worrying about the future, regretting and reliving the past**
- **When you are not present, your not evolving from the present**
- **Be present**
- **Be in pain, anger, resentment, guilt, joy, fear or love, be present**
- **Right now**
- **Not being present is avoidance and avoidance maintains the status quo**
- **Are you happy with what you are doing now? What are you able to change to make it different?**

Research Says: Find Leisure-Scape

- **Chronic illness leads to loss of leisure activities**
- **Depression and further decline in health**
- **Voluntary nature of leisure offered research participants important benefits in coping with and managing illness**
 - Greater sense of control
 - Alternative experience of one's body to the 'sick body'
 - Knowledge creation that supports adaptation to the uncertainties of illness trajectories
- **Leisure activities are sources of meaning, enjoyment, and purpose**



What leisure have you lost as a result of Long COVID?

- **Leisure encompasses a diverse and complex category of activities that is usefully divided into ‘casual’ and ‘serious’ leisure.**
 - Casual leisure is an “immediately, intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived pleasurable activity requiring little or no special training to enjoy,”
 - Serious leisure, in contrast, “is the steady pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or career volunteer activity that captivates its participants with its complexity and many challenges.”
- **What leisure activities can you bring back?**
- **Which ones can you no longer do? How can you adapt new ones?**
- **Create a list of leisure activities for yourself each day, commit to 1.**



Gratitude
turns what
we have
into enough.
Aesop

Gratitude

- **Chronic illness can override and take away all that is good.**
- **Gratitude is a protective factor against depression in chronic illness.**
- **Gratitude needs three steps**
 1. Recognition
 2. Attention
 3. Appreciation
- **Gratitude checks daily**
- **What are you grateful for right now?**
- **Write three gratitude essays to someone important in your life**
 - <https://www.mindful.org/an-introduction-to-mindful-gratitude/>

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Piglet noticed that even though he had a Very Small Heart, it could hold a rather large amount of Gratitude.

A.A. MILNE

“

Holistic care is vital. There is no clear answer to most of the concerns these people have. We simply don't understand enough about the Long COVID syndrome to give reliable information about the outlook. In my experience it is uncertainty that scares us: once we're given the diagnosis, the prognosis, the clear plan, we then have a target, something to aim for, a route to take, and a team to support us.

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