

Milena likely contracted Lyme disease in the 80s, as a child, while playing in her grandmother's yard, in Boulder, CO, where she experienced her only known tick bite. To this day, many experts will claim that the likelihood of this happening are impossible. During her youth, she experienced neurological and mental health issues, fatigue, and migrating pain but was generally healthy and active. She began practicing yoga during college at Colorado State University, in Fort Collins, and was immediately hooked – often practicing as many as three times per day between classes. She found yoga to be beneficial not only for her physical body but also for her mind, including the ways it helped her to de-stress from demanding college life. After graduating she relocated to New York City for a job opportunity and, over the next decade, would continue to practice at yoga collectives throughout the city. As time went on, her health continued to deteriorate, which she attributed to burnout from fast paced living, prompting her to return to Colorado to take time off and pursue her growing interest in the healing arts.

Taking some time for rest didn't help and despite worsening health, in 2017, she pursued her dream of completing a yoga teacher training. The experience was life-changing and taught her essential concepts and skills for living a more balanced life. Afterwards, she was exhausted, and in a lot of pain, but also incredibly inspired. Although she was struggling, she pursued more trainings and workshops in the areas of yoga, Ayurveda, Reiki, and herbalism. But within a few months she could barely function due to continual exhaustion, widespread pain, fevers, bed-drenching night sweats, low blood pressure/fainting and swollen glands, in addition to increasing emotional and cognitive issues. Initial serological testing showed little out of the ordinary. According to her labs, she should have been functioning as a perfectly healthy adult.

It was during a visit to a chiropractor who casually mentioned, "You seem like my patients who have Lyme disease, but don't worry, it's no big deal!" that prompted her to undergo testing for *Borrelia burgdorferi*. Once Lyme disease was confirmed, Milena began a 60-day regimen of Doxycycline with supportive therapies. She was ready for the nightmare to be over and eager to get back to pursuing her goals. After completing the treatment, she showed some improvement for a few weeks but then had a disappointing relapse. It would take working with numerous Lyme literate doctors and practitioners to effectively treat the infection, as well as uncover additional bacterial, viral, and parasitic infections, autoimmune disorders and food and environmental sensitivities - all of which were contributing to her depleted health. For the next several years, what little energy Milena had would be focused entirely on recovery as she underwent treatments and made critical changes to her diet and living environments.

One of the most difficult challenges was the isolation she experienced, including the inability to practice yoga at studios. It was often impossible for her to leave home or

drive a vehicle. Even the gentlest classes would aggravate her inflamed body and completely exhaust her, resulting in lengthy setbacks. As well, many of the yoga studios would burn incense or candles, triggering her chemical sensitivities. Fortunately, the valuable experience she had practicing and studying yoga gave her the skill to continue effectively on her own and helped her to cope with what would be the most difficult and isolating years of her life.

Throughout her recovery, Milena compiled a specialized format of yoga and stress reduction, focusing on techniques that brought only relief and healing to her highly sensitive body and anxious mind. In the spring of 2020, she began offering virtual yoga and stress relief sessions to others, helping them to cope with anxiety and isolation brought on by the pandemic.

Milena's recovery journey continues; however, has reached a point where she can expand and provide her unique offering to a wider audience of chronic illness survivors. Her program includes elements from healing styles of yoga such as Kundalini, Kaiut, Hatha, and Restorative. In addition to modified asana (movements and postures), she includes gentle breathwork, meditation, visualization, and mantras (repeated affirmations) that she has carefully selected or designed for those who are living with the many physical, emotional, and cognitive challenges of life with long-term illness. She offers contraindications to meet every individual wherever they are at on their journeys and strives to bring mind/body healing without causing exhaustion, flare-ups, or setbacks. Milena creates a safe and judgement-free space, where her students can be authentically seen and heard. If some will be joining from bed or the couch, or do not own a mat, that's not a problem. All are welcome.

When she is not teaching, practicing, or studying yoga, Milena enjoys gardening, cooking, dabbling in arts and crafts, spending time in nature and cuddling with her two sweet little therapy dogs, Ruby, and Oli.