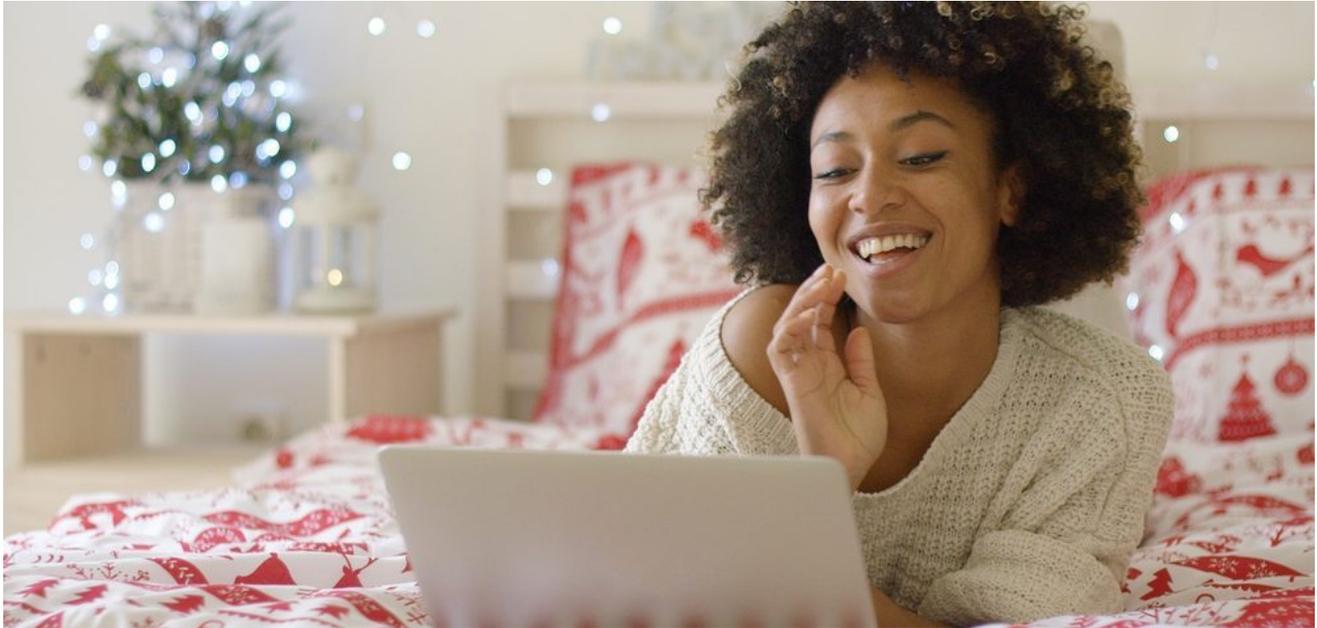


Laughing My Way Through the Pain of IBD

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admin

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Recently, one of my friends shared [an article](#) about how people who appreciate dark humor generally are highly intelligent. All this time I thought I was being a smart aleck, but I was actually being smart!

The article cited a study published in the journal *Cognitive Processing* that defined black humor as “a kind of humour that treats sinister subjects like death, disease, deformity, handicap or warfare with bitter amusement.” Reading both the article and the study reminded me of the time when I was a teenager and my mother called me “demented” because of my sense of humor. And that was before I was diagnosed with a chronic disease.

One would think that having chronic health problems and being told that your body is a ticking time bomb destroying itself from the inside out would send a person into a downward spiral. For me, it was comedic gold, and I use humor to see the “bright side” of living with chronic disease.

In being diagnosed with not one, but two — [and now possibly three](#) — chronic diseases, I have a choice: make myself miserable by feeling sorry for myself and make everyone else miserable by constantly complaining about my health, or make myself and others smile by managing my illness with grace and finding the joys in life. I've always chosen the latter,

usually by making dark, self-deprecating jokes, like the time I told one of my nurses that if the doctors can't cure me, at least they can use my disease-riddled body to cure others after I die.

I sometimes have the maturity and sense of humor of a 13-year-old boy about a disease that causes me to leak more gas than the Deepwater Horizon and drop more deuces than Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. How can I not laugh at myself or my situation?

After receiving my Crohn's diagnosis, I preferred not to seek out others and shied away from support groups because I feared they would be too depressing. I try to avoid drama at all costs in my daily life, so sitting around other sick people talking about our aches and pains just didn't sound appealing to me. Sometimes, I would troll IBD forums and online groups, searching for others going through similar experiences, but I never actively participated in discussions.

It wasn't until I finally joined Facebook three years ago that I searched for IBD and Crohn's groups to follow. While liking advocacy group pages such as the Crohn's & Colitis Foundation was a no-brainer, I stumbled upon a page that really spoke to me: "Crohn's sucks so why not laugh about it?" The page warns readers that "if you are easily offended or grossed out then this page is not for you," which makes me wonder what types of pages I viewed and what posts I liked that caused Facebook's algorithms to suggest that I might like to follow such a page.

This page's collection of memes, photos, and videos about living with IBD never fails to bring a smile to my face, or as most IBD sufferers can relate to, to make me laugh so hard I literally **** my pants.

The posts, however, are not always fun and jokes. Every so often, a post poignantly addresses the harsh realities of IBD or elicits a sad emoji response. Sometimes comments on posts lead to deeper, insightful discussions about our shared experiences. But for the most part, the page is a place where very sick people — literally and figuratively, in a comedic sense — can laugh through the tears of our disease and cry from the laughter.

I know that keeping a sense of humor and being positive is easier said than done. I know that being able to smile instead of having an emotional meltdown can seem impossible. But I also know that every time I've been hospitalized, I've had doctors and nurses remark about my cheerful attitude despite my circumstances. One surgeon even told me that she wished all of her patients were as easygoing as I was because it would make her job easier.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox sums up positivity through pain in her poem "Solitude," which begins with, "Laugh, and the world laughs with you; Weep, and you weep alone." I wholeheartedly agree. But as someone living with IBD, I agree even more with an internet meme that replaces the second line with: "Fart, and you fart alone."

If laughter is the best medicine, then I'm an addict.

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