

Be Determined

Lynn Steeves

Lynn lives in Lacombe, Alberta with her husband Gene. They love to unplug and enjoy the outdoors--- hiking, biking, trail riding and fishing. They have passed this desire to their children and grandchildren and are thrilled to have them tag along on adventures.

It's been 9 years of managing the residual effects of GBS. Being totally paralyzed and placed on life support certainly left a few challenges that will remain a part of my life. These years of compensation, injuries, and aging have taught me that my rehabilitation is somewhat fluid. It changes because I am changing.

For example--I had badly injured my right foot by carelessly jumping out of the truck box. It already has a substantial amount of nerve damage (not a medical term, but the neurologist said "it is messed up") from GBS. After trying physiotherapy and three steroid injections my next best option was surgery. Six months post-surgery, I was still very limited because of pain, and I became frustrated and disappointed. I had been diligent with the necessary exercises, but my recovery had plateaued. Plus, I gained weight from not being active enough and emotionally eating. I was in a rut.

A close friend told me about a certified sports therapist who may be able to help me. I remembered my own advice to others: keep an open mind, if something, or someone, doesn't work then try something, or someone, else. I encourage others to keep trying, to not give up. In my dad's words "if you won't do it, who will?" A great reminder to take responsibility myself.

My appointments with Carly have been extremely successful. She focuses on specific areas to target the affected nerves, while also considering how my entire body is compensating. These sessions can feel like workouts at times as she aggressively targets the nerves. However, it has been highly effective in improving my strength and flexibility. Carly expects me to continue doing the exercises at home to maintain and enhance my progress. This is the same goal I had when I started my recovery from GBS, but now, years later, I am achieving it through a different approach. This past year she has helped me to trust my body again and push myself in new ways.

I am changing, therefore my treatments change

Along with accepting the effects of GBS, now I am aging too. It's ok, I am grateful to be growing older. I have ways to manage. Probably the most important, and most difficult, coping skill I have is to take time to rest. I function really well for three busy days in a row, but this is my maximum. I used to say I need a down day, but that sounds negative. Now I refer to it as a recharge day. If I push too hard for too long, it takes me too long to bounce back. I am sure everyone can relate—when we are tired, we are at a higher risk of injury. Our bodies hurt more, issues seem to multiply, even our sleep is affected. Prevention is important.

I try hard to manage a healthy diet. Added weight is very hard on joints and ultimately effects balance. I am reminded of this every time I carry a backpack. My feet get sore faster, and I must pay closer attention to stability. I attended a nutritional webinar where a neurologist shared evidence that certain foods play a role in increased inflammation and should be limited or avoided while other foods are necessary to improve certain functions and maintain health. This information aligns with what nutritionists say as well. It's definitely advice to consider.

I greatly value the expertise and advice of my doctors. For example, COVID, and the heated debates surrounding vaccinations was especially hard for me to navigate because my GBS was caused by the flu vaccine. My neurologist was as concerned as I was. He even arranged a private meeting for me to discuss concerns with the Alberta Health Communicable Disease Control specialists. I was encouraged that they wanted to speak to me, they typically only have medical discussions with other specialists. They gave me with accurate and heartfelt information to consider, of which I am so thankful.

I have a bucket of things to do

I also continue to trust friends and family. They are considerate and understanding of my limitations. They may roll their eyes a little when I say, "I have an idea", but they always support and encourage me. I could not accomplish my goals and dreams without them. I have an actual bucket of things I want to do and places I want to go, not just a bucket list!

It was an amazing and exciting four days of camping in this beautiful and remote area of the Grand Canyon where the Havasu Creek meets the Colorado River. The hardest and most rewarding day was descending and ascending Mooney Falls, a 210-foot precarious climb to the base of the falls using worn ladders, chains and footholds in the cliff face. Quite a challenge for someone with residual nerve damage in both feet. Gene, my husband, climbed down ahead of me and placed my feet in the holes and on small ledges, definitely an exercise in my trust and faith in him. On day four we started the difficult hike back to the canyon rim. It had rained a bit the night before, so the gorgeous turquoise waters had become murky and the Havasu Creek was rising. The trail goes through the Havasupai Indian village where the Supai Tribe that manages

this part of the canyon live. We noticed several people congregating near the helicopter pad. Something was up. A ranger stopped us and said the bridge ahead of us was washed out and the bridge behind was washed out. The only way out was a helicopter! The rain “on top” caused a dam to break upstream, creating a flash flood in this part of the canyon. Hikers ahead and behind us were sent to higher ground. We were stuck between them and probably in the best location because of the proximity to the Havasu Creek. By the time we were evacuated out, the waters were very high, thick and muddy. As far as I know everyone made it out safely. Quite an end to this adventure.

I am determined to continue to search for ways to help me navigate the expected and unexpected changes and challenges associated with post-GBS and aging. I will keep in mind the fluidity of it all, re-evaluate and make changes as circumstances change, so I can function well and continue to live a life full of adventure!



Lynn carefully traverses one of the Havasu River crossings in the Grand Canyon.



Lynn’s husband Gene makes sure to place Lynn’s feet safely as they descend 210 feet to Mooney Falls.