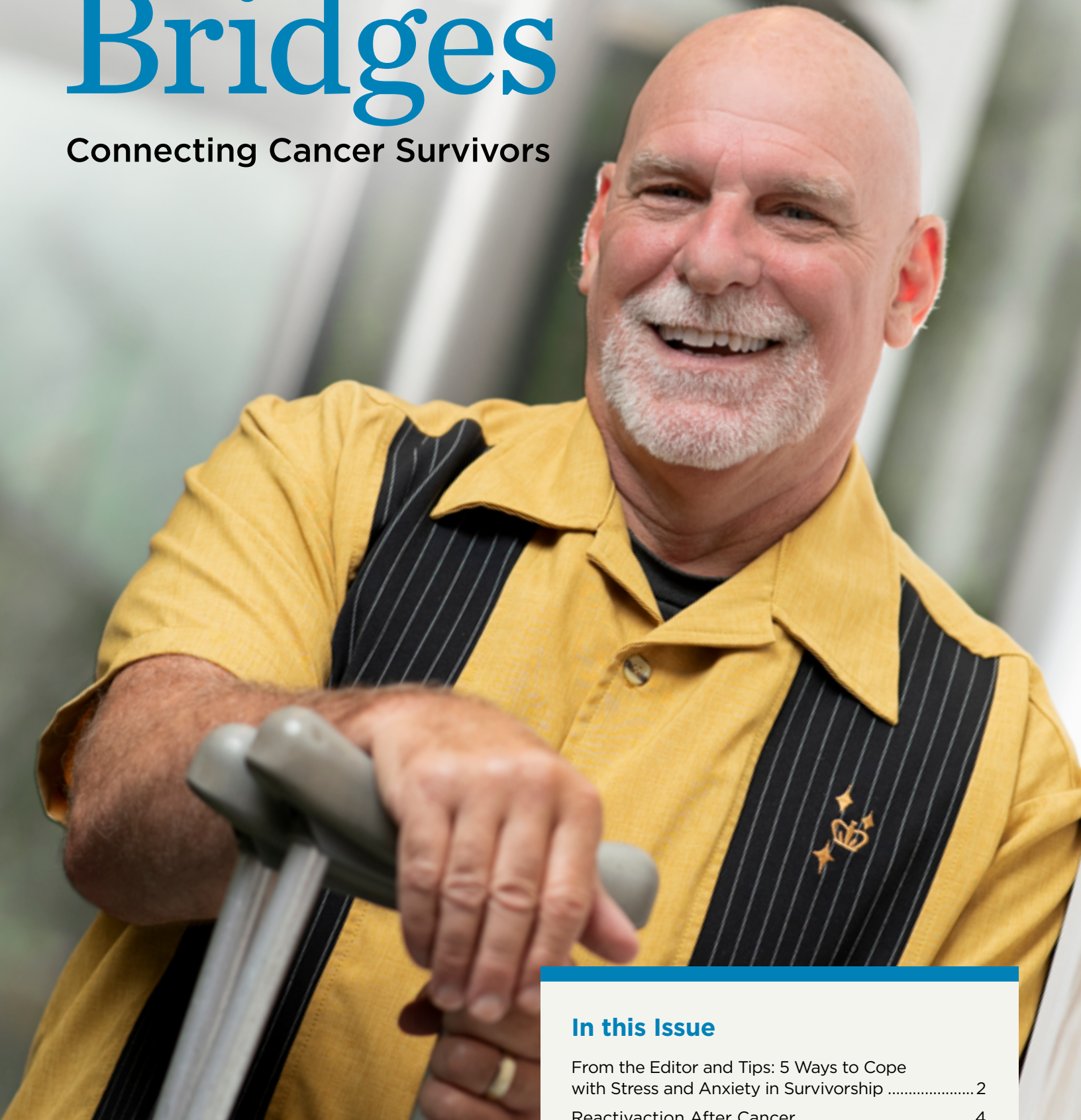


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Bridges

Connecting Cancer Survivors



In this Issue

From the Editor and Tips: 5 Ways to Cope with Stress and Anxiety in Survivorship	2
Reactivation After Cancer	4
Cover Story: Paratrooper Defies the Odds	5
Ask the Professional	6
You Aren't Just a Statistic.....	7



Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center

From the Editor

By Eileen F. Gould



Integrative medicine (IM) at MSK combines evidence-based natural treatments with each person's overall care plan to enhance their quality of life, increase their self-awareness, and help prevent and manage symptoms

from cancer. The Integrative Medicine Service at MSK is ever expanding. Over the years, I have seen it grow from a few offerings of massage and acupuncture to numerous programs today. IM was started in 1999, so celebrating its 20th year. At that time, it was trailblazing for a cancer hospital to offer complementary therapies in addition to conventional medical care. The therapies are now available to both inpatients and outpatients in Manhattan, with additional outpatient services available in New Jersey, on Long Island, and in Westchester County. These services can assist in improving the quality of life for people with cancer and survivors. Some of the current options are acupuncture, massage, meditation, yoga, Tai Chi,

exercise, and music, dance, and movement therapies.

In this issue of *Bridges*, Jun Mao, Chief of the Integrative Medicine Service, shares his expertise on sleeping better without medication.

In my travels around MSK as both a patient and survivor, I've tried some of these therapies and have become a believer. They can help as an adjunct to the standard medical treatments in improving quality of life and managing symptoms.

If you would like to share your story or receive an email copy of *Bridges*, please visit www.mskcc.org/bridges



Leah Morage is a licensed clinical social worker with MSK's Resources for Life After Cancer program. She specializes in providing psychosocial care for cancer survivors. She has postgraduate training in cognitive behavioral therapy and trauma-focused work, and experience in community outreach initiatives.

Tips: 5 Ways to Cope with Stress and Anxiety in Survivorship

By Leah Morage, LCSW

The period after finishing cancer treatment can be confusing. Well-intentioned friends, colleagues, or family members may congratulate you on completing treatment. While you may rightfully share this sentiment, you may be grappling with shifting life priorities and anxiety. Anxiety includes feelings of worry, tension, or restlessness. After cancer treatment, anxiety often centers around fears of the disease coming back. Some call this unease before a scan “scanxiety.” These worries are very common and normal. It is, however, important to speak with your doctor or mental health provider if these feelings begin to interfere with your daily life.

These tips can help you cope with daily stress and anxiety after cancer treatment. Coping strategies are all individual. Your personal philosophies or work-life responsibilities affect what works best for you. There is no single right way to cope or feel. Each of your experiences is valid and unique to you.



1 Practice cognitive coping skills.

Cognitive behavioral techniques examine the relationships among thoughts, emotions, and behavior. Because thoughts can inform how we feel, it can be helpful to look at what causes thoughts and what their effect is. A mental health professional can help you identify your thinking patterns. Relaxation and healthful sleep activities are beneficial, too.



With all the benefits this can bring, it is important to be mindful of the source. Talk to your care team about your individualized plan for follow-up care, visit websites operated by reputable organizations (such as the National Institutes of Health, the American Cancer Society, or MSK), or take advantage of educational programs and lectures offered at MSK or in the community.

2 Try support groups.

Some people feel less isolated when they go to support groups. Everyone deserves to be seen and understood. Support groups often provide this validation while allowing participants to share information and learn new strategies.



4 Enlist your social circle.

Social support comes in many forms. It may be helpful to designate certain tasks to your trusted friends and family. This may be especially useful if you need practical help while returning to work while also living with late effects of treatment.



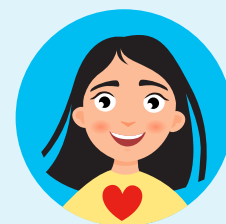
3 Use education for empowerment.

The age-old adage “knowledge is power” holds true. This is an age of incredible medical advancement, and a wealth of information is readily available.



5 Find meaning and resiliency.

Human beings have the incredible ability to adapt to various circumstances. Going through a life-changing experience such as cancer can help you reconnect to a greater sense of purpose or meaning. Perhaps most importantly, have empathy for yourself throughout this process.



Reactivation after Cancer

By Dr. Darla Shaw

After two serious bouts with a rare, aggressive nasal cancer, I wanted nothing more than to lie in bed and do as little as possible. But although I had no motivation to become more active and return to my life, I knew that I had to get out of this funk. I had to become more productive and take charge of my life again, even at age 81. To do this, I set at least one goal that I knew I could accomplish each day, and each night I wrote down at least one item I was grateful for.

I knew I had to get my body moving again, so I got a prescription from my doctor for physical therapy, which not only got me out of the house but taught me exercises I could do at home. At the same time, I had my husband join me for short walks up and down the corridors of the local recreation center.

Once I was stronger, I started taking chair yoga and then regular yoga at the local cancer rehab center. This was followed by joining the SilverSneakers program at the YMCA and doing water aerobics, aerobics, and weight training. There was no cost for these, but they did require the grit to leave my comfort zone.

Before cancer I had been a full-time professor. After improving physically, I signed up to teach as an adjunct, mainly online, with a few face-to-face sessions. Teaching kept me stimulated and feeling productive again.

Teaching online also made me realize that I could do so much with my computer, and I began to write articles and submit them for publication. I also



Dr. Darla Shaw has been teaching for 63 years, the last 26 as a professor of education and women's studies at Western Connecticut State University in Danbury. She is also a performer, taking on the roles of numerous famous women in history and playing accordion and steel drums with three bands. Having traveled to over 90 countries, Dr. Shaw is happiest when working in developing countries on local literacy projects.

began to blog about my experiences with cancer and do podcasts from home. I began corresponding with friends who had supported me through cancer and also people I had not talked to in quite a while. It was very rewarding.

Being in touch with friends made me think of traveling again. I knew that my compromised immune system meant that I could no longer do humanitarian trips to developing countries, so instead of crossing

oceans, I crisscrossed the United States. I started with New England and branched out from there. These trips were all very special, as personal contacts brought greater joy than just about anything.

Service projects and volunteering, which were a big part of my life prior to cancer, came into play once I had become physically and mentally active and began to travel. I was now strong enough to work on fundraisers involving standup comedy and taking on the role of famous characters. I made presentations and gave lectures on my various trips and working at numerous National Parks, and I went to schools and organizations as a storyteller.

After cancer I had the choice of leading a sedentary existence for the remainder of my life or getting on with the active life I had before. It was not a hard decision, but it was undeniably tough to get started when I felt weak and dispirited.

Rosie the Riveter said, "We can do it," and we can. This quote is especially apt in regard to recovering your life after cancer. It is all about a mind-set and refusing to settle for being a lesser version of yourself. After cancer you can be physically, mentally, and socially active again. You can also provide service to your community and be there for other people who need your help.

For me, staying in bed and feeling sorry for myself was never an option.

Paratrooper Defies the Odds

By David L.

Words cannot express how happy I am to be here to tell you my story. I'm a four-time osteosarcoma cancer survivor, and boy, does it feel great to be alive!

I attribute much of my recovery to being a weight lifter my whole life. I am also a martial artist (I earned my black belt in American freestyle karate) and a veteran paratrooper. You could say I'm a motivated son of a gun.

As you might imagine, I have been through numerous surgeries. My "favorite" was when I underwent a rotationplasty. In this procedure, a surgeon amputates the foot and, after sectioning the femur, attaches the foot at knee level, leaving one whole leg and one half-length leg with the foot at the knee. Furthermore, the foot is placed on backwards and upside down. Just try and picture that! (For the full effect, I recommend a Google search.) It was a long surgery and an even longer recovery. After it all, I unfortunately had to have the whole leg amputated a year later. I certainly had to make some adjustments to my life with a three-wheel Harley!

Despite it all, 17 years later I am still here. And if I'm being honest, I'm a happy camper. My wife says I was born with a happy gene because I smile so much. It makes me feel better, and it also makes other people around me feel better. I feel inspired lifting the spirits of others. I try to thank the Man for every beautiful day I wake up and set out to achieve new accomplishments. Recently, I even climbed the first five peaks of the Presidential Range

in New Hampshire, ending with Mount Washington!

I'm also a strong believer in the power of a positive attitude. I speak to students at Rutgers University about my story and hope to inspire them through their own challenges in life. It was there that I discovered my knack for speaking from the heart and how to really connect with people. I'm quite a passionate guy. By telling my story in a humorous and thoughtful way, audiences really get a good feeling of what it's like recovering from chemotherapy and surgeries, and how to keep moving forward.

Since my last surgery approximately four years ago, I've learned that veterans are dying by suicide at an alarming rate. Through my own recovery and rehabilitation, I've gained a keen awareness of how to gather the strength to carry on. I've also had my own bouts of post-traumatic stress from my time in the military and police work. So I've recently turned my attention and goals toward helping veterans suffering with PTSD. My wife and I even walked a marathon to honor World War II veteran prisoners of war. The event is called the Bataan Memorial Death March in New Mexico. I made it 14.2 miles on crutches over 12 hours. My wife made the whole 26.2 miles.



David L. is from New Jersey. He was a medic in the US Army 10th Special Forces Group and later became a police officer. He enjoys weight lifting, martial arts, and beekeeping. He is a voracious reader (of mostly nonfiction) and loves gardening.

Last but not least, my recovery would not have been possible without the help of my adoring wife. I smile just remembering her in the hospital with me all those days and nights, weeks and weeks. Caregivers are a must for people in the hospital. Not only are they a great comfort but people need an advocate, and I'm so thankful for her. Always, I mean always, thank a caregiver. They need hugs more than the patient! Recently, my wife and I rafted down the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon the whole way. We've really come a long way. Caregivers are truly the unsung heroes in anyone's recovery, and I owe my life today to the caregivers who went through it with me by my side.

Ask the Professional:

Sleeping Better without Medication

By Jun Mao, MD, MSCE



Jun Mao, Chief of the Integrative Medicine Service, is an integrative medicine doctor and licensed acupuncturist. His research focuses on combining Eastern and Western approaches to help people with cancer and survivors manage symptoms due to cancer treatment.

What is insomnia?

We all have difficulty sleeping on occasion. But for up to 60 percent of cancer survivors, a rare night of poor sleep can turn into many sleepless nights. People who struggle with insomnia have difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep at night at least three nights per week for at least three months. If left untreated, insomnia can become chronic, meaning it lasts for years or even decades.

Why do some people with cancer develop insomnia?

Some people with cancer have chronic insomnia before their diagnosis. Others may develop insomnia after being diagnosed. Such cancer treatments as surgery, chemotherapy, steroids, and antihormone medications can cause symptoms that disrupt sleep.

These include pain, hot flashes, and frequent urination. Furthermore, a cancer diagnosis often reveals layers of underlying psychological distress. This distress, as well as fear of the cancer returning, can prolong insomnia, and it might continue well into survivorship. This is why insomnia is such a common chronic condition.

How does insomnia affect cancer survivors?

Insomnia's impact can be wide-ranging. It may cause daytime fatigue that makes it difficult to maintain a normal routine and seriously impacts quality of life. For example, cancer survivors commonly report difficulty returning to work because of insomnia. It can also cause cognitive issues. This might include problems with memory and attention. In addition, many people treated for cancer who have insomnia may be coping with pain, fatigue, depression, and anxiety at the same time. The combination of multiple challenging and interconnected symptoms can leave survivors feeling even more overwhelmed.

What integrative medicine treatments and resources do you recommend to cancer survivors for insomnia?

Insomnia is commonly treated with sedative medications that often have significant side effects. Thankfully, there is emerging evidence for promising integrative treatment approaches as well.

We recently completed a study funded by the Patient-Centered

Outcomes Research Institute. To find the best treatment for insomnia in cancer survivors, we compared two nonmedicine treatments: cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I) and acupuncture. We wanted to see if one treatment worked better than the other. In CBT-I, a trained therapist helps a patient examine and change certain sleep behaviors and thoughts to improve sleep. Acupuncture is a traditional Chinese medicine technique that involves stimulating points on the body with very thin needles to treat symptoms and promote healing.

We found that both acupuncture and CBT-I reduced insomnia. The results lasted for three months after the treatments ended. Overall, CBT-I was more effective, especially for people with mild insomnia. Acupuncture was more effective for pain, so it may be particularly helpful for those who experience both insomnia and pain.

Here at MSK's Integrative Medicine Service, we offer CBT-I and acupuncture, as well as other evidence-based approaches, including yoga and tai chi classes. Eugenie Spiguel, our nurse practitioner, is trained to provide CBT-I. These sessions are available individually either in person or through live video conferencing. Acupuncture is available at MSK in Manhattan and at all of our regional facilities. In addition, on our website we have a series of free meditation videos, including practices like guided imagery and yoga nidra, to help cancer survivors relax and get ready for bed.

■ *Continued on page 8*

You Aren't Just a Statistic

By Dexter DSouza

Dexter DSouza lives in Hong Kong with his wife, Deepika, and their two boys. He's a passionate golfer and squash player and attempts to solve the *Times* crossword on weekends.



I believe in the power of the mind and the psychosomatic healing effect it has on the body. If you engage in activities with long-term utility, your body will prepare to live for the long haul.

“We recommend amputating the leg above the knee” were the words that broke me in every way possible.

My story starts in December 2017 with a noticeable swelling in my right calf. I was home in Hong Kong fresh from running the New York City Marathon and breezily dismissed this as a pulled muscle from weekly squash practice. Then came every cancer symptom imaginable, and in March 2018, doctors found a beer bottle-sized high-grade stage III tumor (undifferentiated pleomorphic sarcoma) in the belly of my calf. Sitting on the hospital bed along with my wife, Deepika, we took the news remarkably well, but a PET scan revealed potential metastasis to lymph nodes higher up my leg. It was definitely limb threatening, possibly life-threatening, and amputation was

recommended. I was left devastated and viscerally worried for our two little boys.

Still reeling from the news, Deepika and I decided to immediately head to MSK while the children would be cared for in Hong Kong by visiting family. I was overcome with circumspection and irrational regret on that 16-hour flight: “Why me?” “I shouldn’t have run that marathon.” “Maybe it’s all that chocolate I keep eating.”

It was late winter when we arrived in New York, which had been our home from 2004 to 2009. My doctors at MSK assured me that this tumor didn’t go to the lymph nodes but was heading for my lungs. The recommendation was the full trifecta: chemotherapy, surgery, and radiation – a seven-month treatment plan. The wonderful thing

about the MSK medical team was that there was no sympathy but heartfelt empathy; the feeling that we were in it together and we would overcome. A well-wisher told me to ignore statistics; to not be a cancer patient but a cancer *survivor* because 100 percent of cancer survivors survive and that is the only statistic that matters.

No one sails through chemo, but I found that a healthy diet and exercise substantially shortened the recovery to about three days after each round. Deepika frequented the farmers market at Union Square and cooked meals as farm-to-table as possible. Although running or squash were a push, I found that yoga had the perfect intensity. No matter how tired I felt before a yoga session, I was rejuvenated afterward.

■ *Continued on page 8*

■ *Continued from page 7, You Aren't Just a Statistic*

As winter rolled into spring, I was on the golf course in between chemo rounds.

I believe in the power of the mind and the psychosomatic healing effect it has on the body. If you engage in activities with long-term utility, your body will prepare to live for the long haul. For example, after every round of chemo, I gave myself a golf club or a pair of jeans — something that has a five- to ten-year utility. I took lessons on trying to improve the weakest part of my golf game: 20- to 30-yard chips. I got busy organizing the DGA Championships, an annual golf event with friends, as a constant reminder to my leg that I would be hitting balls long and straight later in the year.

Summer brought the end of chemo, and the children came over from Hong Kong. Everything was sunnier with the kids around! We mastered the Rubik's Cube, rode bicycles along the West Side Highway, watched the soccer World Cup on TV, and sang along to Billy Joel at the Garden. Cancer got its pound of flesh as surgery led to the loss of two out of three large muscles in my calf. Radiation lasted all through autumn, but before the winter set in, I rang that bell and it was time to go home.

Back in Hong Kong, I have made peace with the fact that I no longer have full functionality, but I do have good functionality. I have swapped my running shoes for a bicycle and now enjoy the long rides through the rolling hills of Hong Kong. With a weaker right leg, I have lost a fair amount of agility on the squash court but have learned to be more efficient and to play with guile. I returned to competitive squash for the Hong Kong Cricket Club, and one of my proudest achievements has been helping my team win the 2018–2019 Hong Kong Squash League in division 11.

From facing a potential amputation to prancing around a squash court – who would have thought it?

P.S. I still suck at those 20- to 30-yard chips.

■ *Continued from page 6, Ask the Professional: Sleeping Better without Medication*

You can find out more about our private therapies, classes, and videos on our website or by calling 646-888-0800. You can also call 646-888-0845 to schedule an appointment with an integrative medicine doctor or nurse practitioner to determine what treatment is most appropriate for you.

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