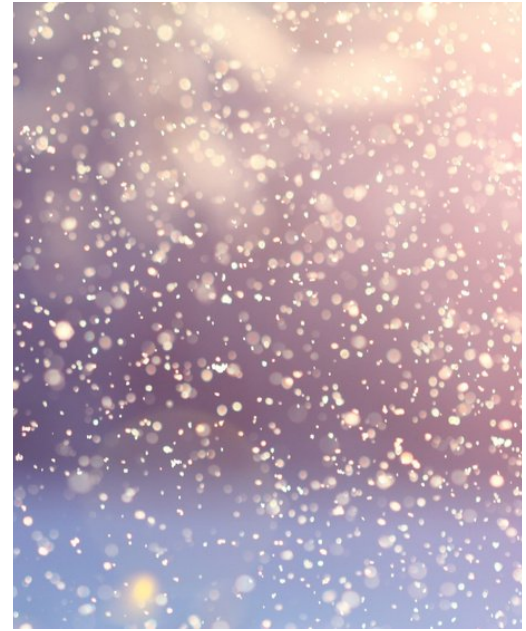
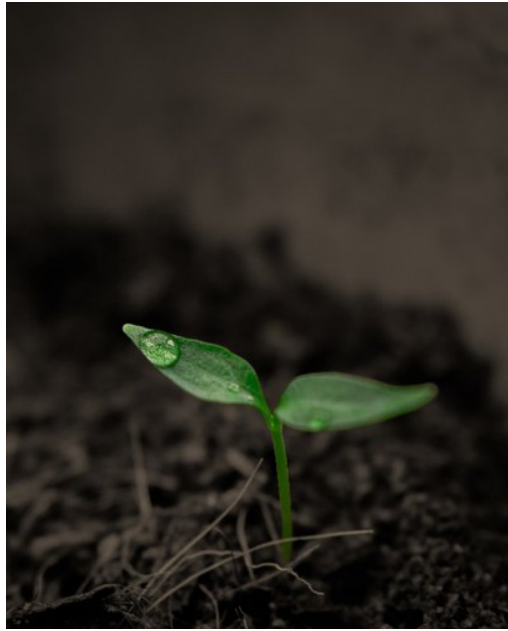


# Life After Burns

Winter 2022 Newsletter



## Welcome

A New Year can be a fresh start for all of us. A full rotation around the sun means we've experienced all 4 seasons, everyone's birthdays, all the holidays, and it is time to start the process all over again. It can feel like a chance to gain a new perspective, to perhaps change a negative pattern, and to make plans to enhance a part of yourself. In this edition of the newsletter, we invite you to consider what you might do differently in 2022, what you will do the same, and reflect on how you've grown on the 2021 journey around the sun.

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## *A Word from Victoria*

As burn survivors and those affected by burns, we are faced with a major change in our lives. This major change can alter the course of life. It might feel like a point of no return, the end of a normal and good life. I often felt this way. Like I had been punished. I felt like I had no resiliency, as though I was weak, even though people told me I am strong.

"Resilience is the psychological quality that allows some people to be knocked down by the adversities of life and come back at least as strong as before. Rather than letting difficulties, traumatic events, or failure overcome them and drain their resolve, highly resilient people find a way to change course, emotionally heal, and continue moving toward their goals."

You may not feel like you are there at this moment, and it may take many more years, but as long as you are working towards the goal of resiliency, you are resilient. You are fighting for yourself, and even for your loved ones. Never doubt your capacity of being resilient, you've got it.

[HTTPS://WWW.PSYCHOLOGYTODAY.COM/CA/BASICS/RESILIENCE](https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/basics/resilience)



*“I can be changed by what happens to me. But I refuse to be reduced by it.”*

**MAYA ANGELOU**



# RESILIENCE IS BUILT IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

BY: ROOPA PILLAPPA



Can you remember the last time you showed resilience? Many of us can remember the truly gruelling times in our lives where we've shown resilience - like after the death of a loved one or after a traumatic accident. The word resilience is often reserved to describe people who are able to quickly recover from difficult times; however, resiliency itself does not appear out of thin air. Similar to any quality attributed to an individual, resilience is gained. Of course, in order to be resilient you must face difficult times but many of us do not want to be put in tough situations - however, in those tough times is where resilience is built. Every obstacle, adversity, and failure we experience can become an opportunity for us to show resilience.

For instance an individual who has been job hunting for months may feel defeated after the first couple of rejections from companies but that same individual can use the dejected feeling of rejection to build unwavering determination and strength to keep on working towards their goal of finding their desired job. In this scenario resilience is crucial as it allows the individual to quickly bounce back and move forward. In these scenarios, resilience is built and with every rejection, the individual is that much closer to achieving success.

Resilience can be shown in every aspect of our lives whether it's in our interpersonal relationships, workplace settings, our hobbies or even with ourselves. Think of the last time you had an unpleasant interaction with a stranger - like the person who cuts you off on your way into work - would you engage in a negative way or would you shrug it off? Would you allow it to ruin the rest of your day or would you forget about it when you stepped into work? Everyday we are given small opportunities to build resilience and these interactions, albeit unpleasant - can certainly be morphed into helpful scenarios that aid us to build resilience. If yesterday you were bothered by the unpleasant interactions then today you can actively try to change your mindset to a more resilient one.

Resilience is built over time and regardless of how small, everyday we are given opportunities to train ourselves to build resilience. In order to build resilience we must differentiate between what we can and cannot control and understand how to actively shape our behaviours to show resilience everyday. Failures, rejections, tragedies and unpleasant interactions can kick us down but with the help of resilience we can get back up again and move forward towards a more happier and fulfilling life for ourselves and those around us.



# POWER OF CROWD

ONE VOICE STRONGER EVERY SEASON



**BY: MOJTABA (MOE) KHEZRY**

Cave paintings as old as 13 000 years ago have been found to show our ancestors gathered to enjoy cultural singing and dancing. These gatherings lead to collective joy, linguistic advancement, and protected them against predators and/or invaders.

Despite positive pre-historic depictions of human gatherings, more recently between 17th to 20th century crowds and crowd behaviour was deemed as easily agitated, irrational, violent, and collective madness.



In the recent decade psychosocial studies have shown that crowds exhibit amazing ability to police themselves, self regulate and support each other reach their collective goal.

One researcher established that amazing things happen to our brains when we are together; we are happier, more confident knowing that people around us are like-minded and the likelihood of us being wrong in a crowd of like-minded people is possibly lower!

It is without a doubt that decisions made by a team of like-minded individuals will lead to diversity of opinion and options on how to best reach the collective goal of burn survivors, a more decentralized decision making process and availability of support for everyone.

We burn survivors at Life After Burns extend our arms to our members and beyond to form a strong crowd that could advocate for our needs, become influential, and ultimately be better supported despite our diverse needs.

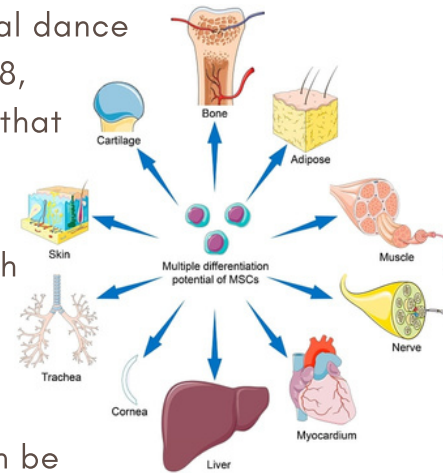




## STEM CELLS COULD BE PROMISING NEW APPROACHES TO BURN GRAFTING AND RECOVERY

Sperm fertilizes an egg and exchanges genetic material in a biological dance and forms a single cell. This single cell then rapidly divides to form 2, 4, 8, and 16 cells in no time. These cells are heavily undifferentiated, meaning that they could differentiate to form muscle, bone, or brain.

Cells need to work with their neighbouring cells and communicate with each other via chemical messages to turn on or off specific genes and in doing so they are informing each other of their decision to become a specific cell type or tissue, i.e. a cluster of cells could decide to dance to the rhythm of life and form heart tissue and this early dance of life can be detected by an examining doctor. Cell differentiation is a crucial stage of life without which body will never form a fully functional unit.



Cell differentiation is a very unidirectional process that means once a cell decides to become specific cell type, they can not go back and reprogram themselves. The good news here is that we all have a chance to store, bank, and or donate stem cells that are born with us in the umbilical cord or borrow ones that are extracted from our children for later use to replace at risk tissue; one such application could be to graft burnt skin.

If you have not collected your own umbilical cord or banked the umbilical cord of your children, do not panic yet! Mesenchymal stem cells, AKA the type of cells that have multiple differentiation potential are still in your body and they can be found in the bone marrow, liver, and even better in fat cells. Yes, you read that correctly in fat cells!

In this Study Zahorec et al. performed liposuction on their patients, isolated Mesenchymal stem cells, grew them in the lab, meanwhile prepared the burnt area by excising the scarred skin and applied the prepared stem cells. The post-surgical outcome was assessed using the Vancouver Scar Scale and found a promising outcome as compared to traditional autograft approach.

ZAHOREC, PETER, ET AL. "AUTOLOGOUS MESENCHYMAL STEM CELLS APPLICATION IN POST-BURN SCARS TREATMENT: A PRELIMINARY STUDY." *CELL AND TISSUE BANKING* 22.1 (2021): 39-46.



# MEDITATION

BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH MEDITATION



**BY: DAYNE MANUEL**

Happy New Year!

While reading this, try to quiet your mind and focus on your breathing. Feel the breath you take in and feel your breath as you exhale. Do this 5 times and if you find your mind wondering off, just go back and start over. You can also try to picture yourself while doing this anywhere in the world that makes you feel happy; for example, on the beach or in a forest.

Once you feel that your mind is quieter and your body more relaxed. Place your intentions on things you would like to improve or work on about yourself. These could be simple things such as working on your fitness, being more positive, or simply slowing things down because of stress. Once you have that in mind let that be the only thing that plays over in your head. While still breathing in, and out.

This is a little exercise I've found helps me stay more focused on my goals and helps my overall mental/spiritual state of being. It just takes a few minutes and you will feel a lot better. You can do this at anytime of the day and anywhere you are. Trust in yourself! We all have an amazing ability within us to control our thoughts, no matter how impossible or overwhelming things may be.



# Book Review BY: BARBARA-ANNE HODGE

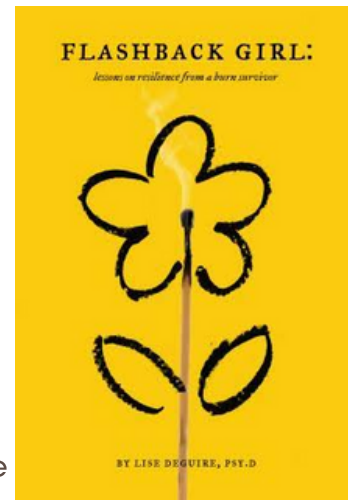
## FLASHBACK GIRL: LESSONS ON RESILIENCE FROM A BURN SURVIVOR BY DR. LISE DEGUIRE



I have read quite a few books written by burn survivors during the three decades I worked as a health care professional on a burn unit, and this one is definitely worth a read!

Dr Lise Deguire presents her past as a series of lessons learned as she recovered from a childhood burn injury. The memoir describes the journey from the serious burn she sustained as a little girl, but it is also about her childhood, her later relationships with family, friends, and co-workers, and how the burn injury set her on a career path to become a clinical psychologist.

This is a book for anyone, but I think anyone affected by a burn injury will find wisdom, truth, and comfort in reading Dr Deguire's memoir. It is well-told with humour and compassion, indeed a shining example of resilience in the face of so much pain and adversity. Burned because of a barbecue accident at the age of 4, Dr Deguire suffered third-degree burns to 65%



f her body. The book title comes from the type of fire that burned her, that is, when an accelerant is used to try to ignite coal briquettes. She was hospitalised for months and was separated from her family during most of this time. She had to undergo frequent surgeries for years, all the while being independent; her parents took the attitude that talking about her pain and scars would make things worse for her, so she came to rely on herself to get through the hard times. I think anyone who has experienced trauma that includes long hospitalizations will find her descriptions of her childhood very cathartic.

I do not want to give away too many spoilers here - how Dr Deguire navigated her adolescence, her university years, and eventually starting a family while setting up her own practice as a clinical psychologist, and even why she decided to write the memoir when she did - this I will leave for you to learn on your own, but it will be well worth your time to read this book.

Don't just take it from me - the book won the Nautilus Book Gold Award in the category of memoir in 2020 and was a finalist in the 2021 Next Generation Indie Book Award. The book is very well-written, it is an honest and moving telling of how this brave young lady turned a tragic and painful accident into a way to help others and to move forward to live a happy and healthy life.

Flashback Girl is available on Amazon in paperback or on Kindle.



## PEER SUPPORT GROUPS

### BURN SURVIVORS & LOVED ONES

Our monthly support group for burn survivors and loved ones focuses on peer-to-peer support. Hosted over Zoom every 4 weeks on Wednesday's at 7pm EST.

Upcoming dates: January 26th, February 23rd, March 23rd, April 20

### CAREGIVERS

A monthly support group for caregivers and family members of burn survivors. This group allows the chance to connect and discuss various topics unique to the experience of providing care for a burn survivor at different stages of their healing journey. Be a part of the community by asking questions, sharing your story, and reflecting.

This group is run by Barb Hodge, a retired Occupational Therapist, and Sandy Cook, a caregiver and wife of a burn survivor.

*This is a closed group, for caregivers only.*

Upcoming dates: January 18th, February 15th, March 15th, April 12th

### SHARE YOUR STORY

Would you like to share your story with others?

Sharing your story is a great way to inspire others. By finding similarities in each others stories, it helps us live more fulfilling lives.

In sharing your story, you can:

- Make others feel less alone
- Give others a voice, find your voice
- Spread hope and awareness

Share at <https://www.lifeafterburns.ca/share-your-story>





## SESSIONS

Experts join us once a month to talk to us about an important topic relating to burns, self care, and healthy and happy living. Hosted over Zoom. Every 3rd Thursday, a speaker discussing a burn-related topic will join us for 40-60 minutes. There will be a chance to ask questions after the speakers presentation.

### **January 20 2022**

Pat Dixon, PTSD

### **February 3 2022**

Lois Budd, The Role of Family and Friends in Acute Care of Burns

### **February 17 2022**

Louise Nayer, Telling Your Truth

### **March 17 2022**

Dr. Lise Deguire, Triumph over Trauma: Rising from the Ashes

Register at <https://www.lifeafterburns.ca/sessions>  
(You only need to register once to receive monthly links)



# Resources

## LIFE AFTER BURNS

[www.lifeafterburns.ca](http://www.lifeafterburns.ca)

[ourlifeafterburns@gmail.com](mailto:ourlifeafterburns@gmail.com)

## CANADIAN BURN SURVIVORS COMMUNITY

[www.canadianburnsurvivors.ca](http://www.canadianburnsurvivors.ca)

## ADVANCEMENT OF CARE AT SUNNYBROOK HEALTH SCIENCES

<https://www.youtube.com/SunnybrookHospital>

## PHOENIX SOCIETY FOR BURN SURVIVORS

<https://phoenix-society.org/>

## WITH LOVE FROM THE LAB TEAM

