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DELLE DONNE

Chronic Illness

WNBA Star Elena Delle Donne Forced to Choose Between Health and Job

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Brette Sember • Follow
July 16, 2020

What happened: Basketball star Elena Delle Donne has had chronic Lyme disease for 12 years and takes 64 pills a day to control the condition, which impacts her immune system. In an open letter published in **The Players' Tribune**, Delle Donne revealed she has quietly struggled for years to manage her health and maintain her WNBA basketball career, continuing to play through her illness.

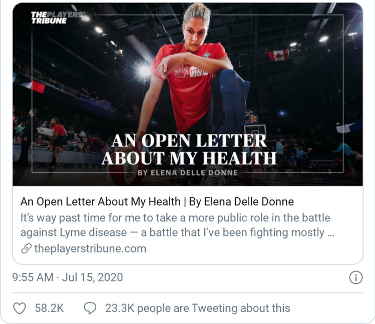
When the coronavirus first made news, Delle Donne learned that a compromised immune system places her at higher risk and took the precautions necessary to protect herself. As the WNBA recently began making plans to return to play by organizing bubbles of players, her doctors said participation would endanger her health and advised her not to play.

Delle Donne filed papers seeking a health exemption, which would allow her to be excused from play while still earning her salary. The WNBA denied her request. She hasn't decided what she will do, but the situation prompted her to write an open letter explaining how challenging Lyme disease is and explaining the conundrum she's facing.

> **I'm now left with two choices: I can either risk my life … or forfeit my paycheck. — Elena Delle Donne**

Elena Delle Donne ✓
@De11eDonne

The league I've given my blood, sweat and tears to has basically told me that my doctors are wrong and I'm wrong for believing them. So I wrote this.



An Open Letter About My Health | By Elena Delle Donne
It's way past time for me to take a more public role in the battle against Lyme disease — a battle that I've been fighting mostly ...
theplayerstribune.com

9:55 AM · Jul 15, 2020

58.2K   23.3K people are Tweeting about this

The Frontlines: Lyme disease is an infection caused by *Borrelia burgdorferi* bacteria, which is transmitted by a tick bite. Most cases can be **treated with antibiotics**. Chronic Lyme disease (also called post-treatment Lyme disease) is a term used to described Lyme patients who are treated but experience a lasting autoimmune response to the bacteria and have ongoing symptoms after treatment. The term is also used to describe people who have the symptoms of Lyme disease but no **definitive evidence** that they were infected. Because of this, it can be a controversial diagnosis.

- 30,000 Lyme disease cases are reported each year to the CDC, but many more people are likely infected
- It's estimated that there may be 9 million cases of chronic Lyme disease in the United States
- Lyme disease research receives just 2% of the funding that West Nile virus does and 0.2% of the funding HIV/AIDS receives even though more people contract Lyme than these two diseases combined

A Mighty Voice: Our community member Lymefighter **talked about** how difficult the disease is. "I have Post Treatment **Lyme Disease** Syndrome. This means that my body has been rendered disabled due to **Lyme Disease** infection and the effects of the medications it took to put the infection into remission. Every day I am reminded of what I have lost and what I have gained from being ill and disabled." **You can submit your first-person story, too**.

From Our Community:

lymefighter
@lymefighter

Still breathing #hopeful #ChronicLymeDisease #PTLDS

I have Post Treatment Lyme Disease Syndrome. This means that my body has been rendered disabled due to Lyme Disease infection and the effects of the medications it took to put the infection into remission. Every day I am reminded of what I have lost and what I have gained from being ill and disabled. I am making this post because I am extremely #anxious . Tomorrow I will meet with a highly regarded

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13 people hearted this

Other things to know: Chronic Lyme disease is not well understood and often stigmatized in medical communities. It can take a huge toll on those who live with it:

- 5 Things I Learned About Lyme Disease After My Symptoms Didn't Go Away
- What I Wish I Could Tell Myself When I Was Diagnosed With Lyme Disease in High School

- What Employers Need to Do to Better Accommodate People With Invisible Illness

How to take action: Get more information about chronic Lyme disease from the **International Lyme and Associated Disease Society**.

Share Your Experience With a Community That Cares

You can now post Thoughts on The Mighty. Here's how.

HEADER IMAGE VIA ELENA DELLE DONNE/INSTAGRAM

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Brette Sember is freelancer, editor, author, ghostwriter, book coach, indexer, and content producer. She lives in western New York state with her husband and two golden retrievers. Her web site is www.BretteSember.com.

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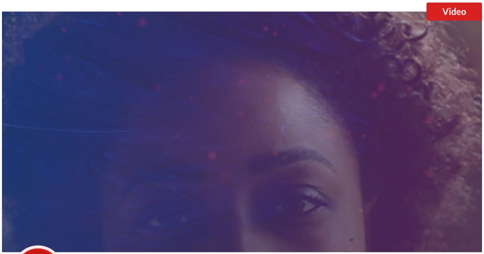

The Mighty Video • Follow
@the-mighty-video
October 16, 2019

Things People May Not Realize We Do Because of Sudden Flare-Ups

You never really know what someone living with chronic illness is going through. Hopefully, with some insights into what a flare-up is really like, we can find more understanding and compassion for

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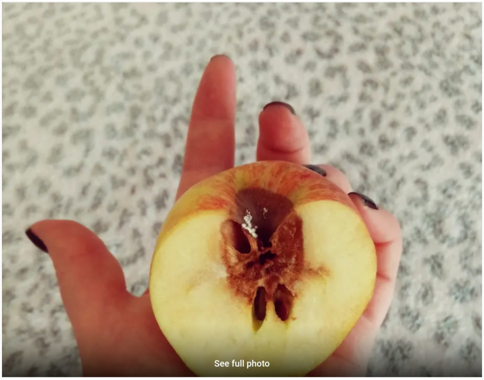

Narcissists

I thought I'd share this pic of a rotten apple with you because an awful lot of us have narcissists in our lives or have had. This is what they are. Tempting on the outside, but POISONOUS on the inside and most of the time most people can't tell unless they take a bite. 🖤

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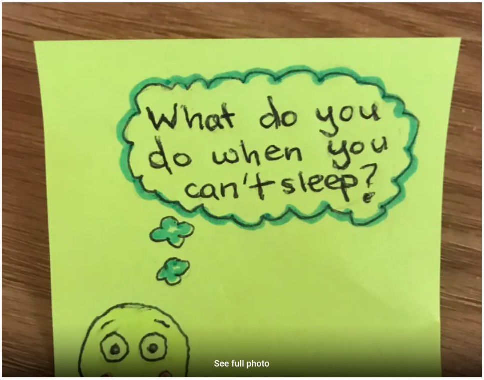
What do you do when you can't sleep?
See full photo

What do you do when you can't sleep?

We understand that sleep and health are often interconnected (spoiler alert: rest is important! 👏). And it can be difficult (and frustrating!) to know what to do when part of

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We are #MightyTogether

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