

a bedtime
STORY





generosity HEALS

IT IS HEALING TO GIVE

Our great gifts often have nothing to do with what we own—and everything to do with who we are. When we love, we give. When we forgive, we give. It is generous to listen, generous to encourage. We are never too poor or too powerless to give.

IT IS HEALING TO RECEIVE

It is easier to be strong than vulnerable. But sometimes the most generous thing we can do is allow someone else to give to us. To receive with openness and gratitude is a kind of generosity.

THE BEDTIME STORY SERIES

is about people who discover the generosity of others and themselves.



the gift of
GIVING

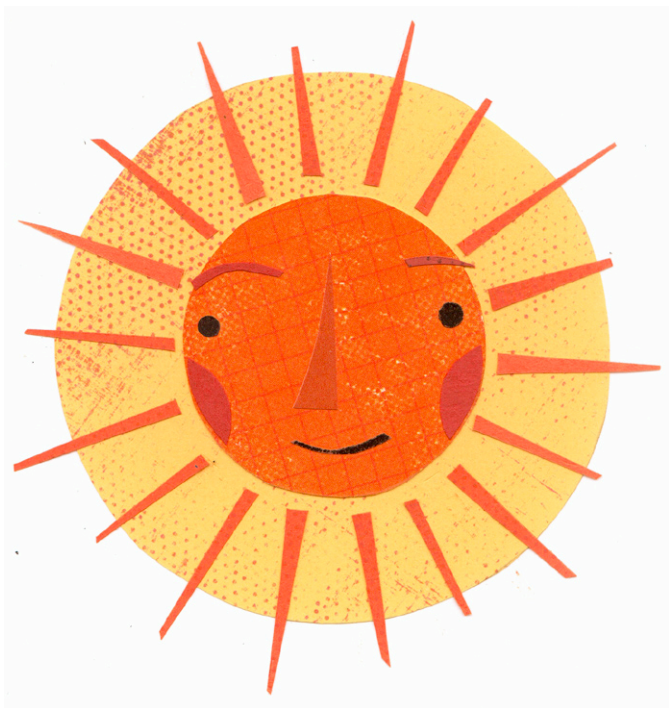
It was 4:00 am and I was wide awake—again.

I had not slept in sixty-three hours. Visions of myself crippled, unable to move my arms and legs, flashed like red fire-exit signs in my mind. Thoughts spun uncontrollably, running in the same tired circles as I worked myself into a full-fledged panic attack.

I'm going to end up in a wheelchair.

I'll never be able to walk again. I'll never find a way to earn a living again. I'll never be able to write again. My friends and family will abandon me. My husband will get tired of taking care of me and leave me locked up in a nursing home before I'm 40, where I'll be ignored day after day and die before I'm 45 from infected bed sores. I'll never get to be a mother. Why have I been cursed with this horrible disease?

My life sucks. My life is over. I want to die.



Just two years earlier, my husband and I stood on a beautiful beach and took our wedding vows. As we looked out over the ocean, we believed there was nothing but clear skies ahead. But our world soon turned gray and stormy.

One morning I woke up with my hands weak, tingly, and painful. Then a few days later, I lost the vision in my right eye.

Within days the diagnosis of multiple sclerosis was confirmed.

Life became a round of hospitals, emergency rooms, physicians, and medications. For awhile I was too weak to lift the little green cup on my bed stand or walk to the bathroom without assistance. *Naturally my life revolved around all I lost.*

It was the night before I was to be admitted for eight days of detox from taking so many medications. I was talking with my friend, South African wise woman Mbali Creazzo. Mbali listened to me, and let me cry for awhile. Then she attempted to pull me out of my self-pity and said,

“Cami, I think you need to stop thinking about yourself.”

First I was silent. Then I howled about what a wreck my body was and how I didn't have any room to think about anything but myself. She said, *“I know, that's the problem. If you spend all of your time and energy focusing on your pain, you're feeding the disease. You're making it worse by putting all of your attention there.”*

Then she gave me a prescription that changed my life: give away 29 gifts in 29 days.

When I started giving, my life switched direction.

New paths began to magically unfold before me. To my utter surprise, they took me away from that empty place to a new one I hadn't been able to imagine.

I have continued the practice ever since. Every day I find some way to make the world a little better. Most gifts are not of money. But even the smallest is powerful for me and for the other person.

I work a little each day and am engaged in life again. It is easier to laugh and smile. My relationships are more intimate and fulfilling.



But most importantly I feel I want to be here.

I realize I am so much more than the physical, and the limitations multiple sclerosis imposes on my body do not stop me from living a purposeful life.

- CAMI WALKER

Thousands of other people have joined Cami in this giving ritual. Her goal is to engage 22,000 people in this practice. She describes the experience of her first 29 gifts in the book *29 Gifts: How a Month of Giving can Change your Life*.



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