

About IBD Podcast - Amber's Reflections on 2020

Welcome to About IBD. I'm your host, Amber Tresca. It's my mission to educate people living with Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis about their disease, and to bring awareness to the patient journey.

Thanks for joining me for this bonus episode. I hope you'll indulge me for a few minutes in a reflection on the past year in IBD.

A while back, a friend of mine from the IBD community and I were talking about social media. We were both feeling that, while there were benefits, we were a little overwhelmed by the time we invest in it. She told me that she was trying to use social media with intention. The conversation and her wisdom about this and so many other things has stuck with me and I think about it often.

Over the course of this year, many of us have felt disconnected from intent. Our goals over the last several months have not been met as we intended. Even so, I think we are doing ourselves a disservice if we think of this as a lost year.

Momentous events occurred all over the world and our society is forever changed for it. In the IBD space, when the pandemic took hold, we saw the medical community act with intention. Almost immediately, advocacy groups, physicians, professional societies, and patient activists were working together to share information. A tracking database to collect data about IBD and COVID-19 was set up. Healthcare providers around the world in the IBD community offered their time for live events to answer questions from patients and caregivers.

Many people even gave their time on my podcast to talk about the pandemic, including:

- Julie Kennedy of The Sick Adventures of a Semicolon Girl in Episode 67 - Tips on Getting An Infusion During the Pandemic
- Jamie Horrigan of @SweetenedByNature in Episode 68 - What It's Like to Have IBD and COVID-19
- Dr Neil Nandi of @FITWITMD in Episode 69 - Tips for Telehealth Appointments During the Pandemic
- Dr Brad Jerson of Connecticut Children's on Episode 77 - Back to School in a Pandemic and Episode 78 - Sending Chronically Ill Kids to School and
- Dr David Rubin of The University of Chicago Medicine in Episode 85 - Answers to COVID-19 Vaccine Questions

Looking back over my year of shows, it was certainly a scramble at times. I was contacting people and asking them to record with me as soon as they had time, rather than working from a set schedule. Instead of recording in person, which I try to do as much as possible, everything now had to be remote. At times I did feel disconnected from intention because it seemed that I was being carried along on a wave. I didn't have any control over the wave and where it took

me but only how I could manage to stay on top of it. My broader goals for the year were not achieved. However, my initial intent for this show, which is providing patients and caregivers with support, information, and connection, was met.

Some have described the past year as being chaotic. For my part, I never felt that way. Instead, daily life became routine. I think my life was more chaotic before the pandemic. During this year, it was quieter and filled not with chaos but with uncertainty. I think as we reflect and then move on, it's important that we mark the distinction between chaos and uncertainty because they are not the same.

As the year turns, we are entering into a new phase. Vaccinations have begun, roughly a year after the world was first introduced to SARS-CoV-2. At the end of next year, we should be, according to the experts who have offered their opinions on it, in a much better place with controlling the pandemic.

What type of mental and physical support will patients and caregivers need as we prepare for several more months of physical distancing, mask-wearing, and hand-washing? What will it feel like to go back to not carefully considering every in-person interaction? Every item we touch in public? Every person with whom we share breathing space? We will undoubtedly have different concerns and needs.

And, just like that, my intentions for next year are already set. However, it's entirely likely that I'll be caught by a different wave and taken somewhere else. That's not always unwelcome but it does test resilience. That's why I think one key to keeping perspective and moving towards goals is to always be mindful of a basic, clear intent. That could be anything from becoming a better advocate for yourself to achieving remission. How you get there may not be apparent right away but when you are questioning your next decision, try going back to your original intent.

Thanks for listening and for your trust in me, and I look forward to continuing to bring you the information you need. If you haven't already, please take a moment to follow me on social media as AboutIBD or to leave a review in your favorite podcast app. It helps people to find me and to find the show so that they can get the evidence-based information they need to live a better life with IBD.

And remember, until next time, I want you to know more about IBD.

About IBD is a production of Mal and Tal Enterprises.

It is written, produced and directed by me, Amber Tresca.

Theme music is from Cooney Studio.