

Hello, fellow sufferers and fellow human beings. We do suffer—some of us more than others. But we are human beings, despite our suffering. When the suffering lessens, we feel more human again, more ourselves, and we are thankful. When our suffering is intense, we hold on knowing that it will usually lessen.

This is what we have in common—unfortunately, our suffering; and fortunately, our humanity. Part of our humanity is our compassion for another patient who is suffering (which comes out of our own experience). And when we have a little energy in ourselves to console and understand another patient, the benefit to that person cannot be underestimated.

A second characteristic we possess is determination. Sometimes the determination is weak, sometime it is stronger. But the determination is to somehow keep going. And then as we become part of the patient movement, even if it's just by keeping in touch with other patients or by being a member of Massachusetts CFIDS/ME & FM Association, our determination is directed not just toward day-to-day survival, but toward, in some small way, doing something about CFIDS/ME.

As we inform ourselves about CFIDS/ME, and as we think about what, within our limits, we can do, our effort is to both relieve suffering and to help find the causes and effective treatments for CFIDS. Such efforts have to be an effort of many people, not just one person. For one person it's impossible. But with many hands turning the wheel, the wheel will slowly move.

So by joining together, we have worked, and can continue to work, wonders. We need to both do what little we can ourselves—and to then to persuade our society and government to provide the programs to relieve our suffering and to fund genuinely scientific research into the causes and treatment of the illness. Society should have an interest in doing this. Anyone can become ill. So it's like an insurance policy—everybody contributes knowing someday s/he may need help. So in a way, by calling for and insisting upon help, we are helping our country and the world. (Even if sometimes they don't get it.)

And as you know, in our effort to help each other, Massachusetts CFIDS/ME & FM Association makes it possible for us to join together to accomplish what we could never accomplish alone. Massachusetts CFIDS/ME & FM Association gives us greater power to both help ourselves and to try to persuade the society and government to help both those who are sick with CFIDS or

FM and those who might become sick. Without Massachusetts CFIDS/ME & FM Association and other organizations that work for patients, we would definitely be worse off.