

The circle of life is an amazing thing. It can also be a humbling experience as we travel around the circle. When I was a teenager I used to tease my mother about getting older as she developed some joint stiffness in her knees and lower back. For my mother this would usually occur with over exertion and would go away with rest. Through my twenties I experienced minor lower back pain on and off after different activities. This was attributed to a fall I took while ice skating when I was fourteen. I had landed hard on my tailbone and had required some ultra sound treatments. By the time I was thirty there were times when I could hardly walk due to the pain in my lower back. After many different doctor visits and referrals to specialists I was diagnosed with a form of arthritis that affects the spine and sacroiliac joints. There are a number of other symptoms such as swelling of the hands and feet as well as headaches.

I was placed on different medications and was also involved in physical therapy to help me learn how to alleviate my pain and to keep my joints healthy. I had a standing order for physical therapy for when the pain became too great for me to manage at home. When I would come into the clinic they would treat me with hot packs, muscle massage, ultra sound treatments and electrical muscles stimulator. The treatments along with rest would usually help my symptoms retreat enough so that I could once again manage at home. One winter when my symptoms were particularly bad the physical therapist working with me suggested that I take one of the electrical muscle stimulators home with me to wear. He told me that he would have my husband watch him set it up on me so that he could replace the electrodes on my back after I showered. The electrical muscle stimulator is used to increase the blood flow into the muscle. This device is also used in victims of spinal cord injuries to help with muscles that are not longer being used to keep them from atrophying there is a regulator on the unit that allows the wearer to increase or decrease the stimulation. When I was wearing the electrical muscle stimulator I would feel slight tingles that would be going to the muscles. When I would go into muscle spasms I would turn on the stimulator to increase the blood flow to the area. This would help to disrupt the spasm and decrease my pain. The device is small enough to place in a pocket and the electrodes are flat so they do not show under clothing. It is a nice alternative for me at work so that I do not have to take pain killers which often make me too tired to perform my job duties.