

The **MERCURY**  
**Diaries**

A memoir of  
healing and hope

**Daniel Forsyth**

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## 1. To mercury hell and back again

No way in a million years could I have believed that I would get poisoned by mercury and that my once-beautiful life would be flushed away in a torrent of ill-health. In this day and age it's pretty far-fetched to think normal people get mercury poisoned and that it's such a big deal. It's difficult to comprehend that modern medical doctors so rarely understand or believe, that diagnosing it is so tricky and that even if they do, they are more likely to do harm than to help.

Not many people get better from mercury poisoning. I am very much in the minority to have recovered. The problems it causes are numerous and ghastly, made all the more difficult by our western medical profession that is blind to it.

Four years ago, back in 2007, all hell broke loose, I was wildly ill and my health and my life collapsed due to mercury that leaked out of my amalgam fillings.

I was just a typical London businessman. I wore a pinstripe suit to work every day for the first ten years of my career. The next twelve years have been a bit more relaxed and I wear smart casual these days. I spent my days on the phone negotiating deals. I did a lot of lunches, dinners and lundinnies. I worked long hours, but no longer than anyone else. I was just getting on with life like everyone else. Just another city bloke. I knew nothing about medical matters.

I had a good life before all this started. First and foremost a fabulous wife, we have been happily together 24 years now, since we were 18. I also had cool friends, a great family and a steady well-paid job that I was good at and loved. I was into all the normal things that normal people are into: football, cricket, rugby, good food, good company, drinking, cars, PlayStations and holidaying anywhere hot. I worked hard and played hard too.

Weekdays were spent working at my desk on the trading floor, by night I could be found unwinding down the pub with the lads. Fri-

day nights became eagerly awaited for the trip to a club for hours of dancing to the wildest and loudest music in town, staggering home exhausted and bleary-eyed at sunrise.

I was a typical white-collar party animal, out all the time, drinking, smoking, partying, clubbing; everything to excess and generally having the time of my life. I am a product of Maggie Thatcher's 1980s chemical generation of young dog-eat-dog city blokes living it up large, totally wrapped up in my own little world of work and play. Life was good and I made sure I enjoyed myself.

My full-on exciting lifestyle came with a blatant disregard for my health. I was never that healthy in the first place; I always seemed to have a cold and was overly skinny as a kid. Slowly but surely my health was slipping and sliding downwards. Once the hectic lifestyle started to bite I toned things down a little, worked out down the gym, changed my diet a little, but nothing stopped the health-crash that came.

Anyway, I did get better, I kept my job, my life, my family, my friends and today I lead a normal life again, but it was an uphill struggle and for a long time it looked like I was never going to make it. I changed too; I went from an ignorant party-animal, to an educated ex-party-animal.

This is my story of what happened to me and how I managed to get back to the land of the living. It's written in chronological order; I didn't know anything in the beginning. As I struggled along I figured stuff out, discovered what meant what. I explain things when I understood them, which is not necessarily when they happened.

Everything in here happened to me and I didn't discover anything new. Everything I did someone else discovered before me, I just read about it somewhere, either in a book or online and then tried it myself. If you want to check out and verify the things I did, to read, review and research an idea, just Google it or read some of the books I recommend; the knowledge is not far away.

My story is written for regular people who are sick and want to get better. I was just a normal bloke whose life was almost wasted by a poi-

son. I use friendly words like ‘stuff’ and ‘gunk’ and ‘funk’ because big long medical words mean nothing to me. This is just the story of how I got better; if you want a reference book full of long incomprehensible words - there are many out there to satisfy those needs.

## 2. In the beginning

Back in the 1990s when I was in my twenties, I was down the pub daily. I had a regular hangover and was smoking 40 a day. After a while something had to give, so I decided to give up smoking. I used the eat-as-much-junk-food-sugar-and-cakes-and-heavy-drinking-method to give up. Even after everything else that’s happened, after everything that you will read about in here, giving up smoking remains the most difficult thing I have ever done in my life. However this is not the story of how I gave up smoking, so I will spare you the details, but it involved a lot of gritted teeth and mental agony.

I succeeded eventually after three torturous years but ballooned in weight to a whopping 202 pounds (92kg) which mostly sat on my beer belly. At the tender age of 26 my waist-line looked like Coco the Clown’s and my teeth rotted from all the beer and junk food I’d scoffed while I was giving up smoking.

In early 1995, when I was 26 years old, I went to the dentist to be told my teeth were full of holes.

“What do you want son, white or metal?”

“What’s the difference?”

“White costs money and you need eight. Silvers are free, courtesy of Her Majesty’s Government.”

“Great, I’ll have the free metal fillings please.”

The dentist gave me four new fillings and four others he drilled out and renewed. I now had eight amalgam fillings.

This was not a stand-out moment in life. This was just another day. I didn’t think anything of it, and why would I? Why would I think this almost random decision to have metal fillings rather than white would

have such a dramatic effect on my life? I didn't know what I'd done, and I didn't think about it for another 11 years.

A couple of months later I went on my annual ski holiday and at the top of the mountain, on a black run, for no apparent reason, my back gave out and that was the end of that holiday, and any future skiing holidays.

Up until that point in life my spine had been just like any other city boy's back, it ached from time to time, but was mostly fine. I spent an agonising week unable to move lying in bed.

My back healed up just enough so that I could walk about. But from then onwards I had a very painful and very weak back. It got progressively worse over the years with repeated injuries from the most innocent of challenges. I have put my back out brushing my teeth, getting out of the bath, getting out of bed, getting in the car and out the car, in the gym, rowing, walking, running, swimming, biking, hiking, lifting, shagging and even flying my kite.

My back was so weak and feeble I had to be oh so careful; it was like walking on eggshells all the time. Eleven years later by the end of 2007 (when I was 37) my back and neck hurt 24 hours a day. I could not carry anything heavy, no suitcases, no shopping bags. I could not lift my baby daughter whatsoever, I could not put her in the car, or high-chair, or her cot, nor could I even bend down to cuddle her. Sitting on the train I could not read a book or newspaper as the neck pain would be staggering from such a simple taken-for-granted activity. I had to sit on the train to the office and focus solely on my posture for the whole journey. Standing on the train was completely out of the question.

All the muscles in my back/neck and legs were stiff as boards. I had massages once a week for years to keep the pain down and was on loads of painkillers.

"Wow, feels like you have bags of rocks in your shoulders," one osteopath memorably said. My muscles seemed unable to unwind or relax.

The massages hurt like crazy, but they did give good limited relief in the short term. I mean, they helped, but I still had to go back again the next week.

My digestion got progressively worse and worse over the years and I had to stop drinking booze completely in my early thirties. I was teetotal for two years, and the four years before that, my alcohol consumption was sporadic due to the nasty after-effects that lasted weeks from a single sip of beer. I had heartburn, bloating and digestive pains 24 hours a day for years.

After each meal I had to go for a 20-minute walk otherwise the heartburn would be excruciating for two to four days thereafter, no matter what I did. Rain or shine I had to go for those walks, after breakfast, lunch and dinner, wandering around in the pissing rain feeling sorry for myself. Why was this happening, what was wrong, why me, how could I get better, why could no one help? Why, why, why?

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Everyone knows if you have a health problem you should get some exercise. I tried working out in the gym, tried rowing, running, swimming and weight training but I always got injured no matter how careful I was. I was focused too. I don't do things by half measures, I worked out five to seven times a week, every week.

I was fit from all the exercise I did, but I somehow still got constantly injured. I would row for 30 minutes, everything would be cool as a cucumber, and as I stood up to get off the machine, my neck would crick and I'd be off games for a couple of weeks. Why? No idea, but it happened monthly and towards the end, weekly. Eventually, after five years the gym was out of bounds totally as I kept getting hurt and recovery took longer and longer.

Much to my amazement (I'm a broker in the city for heaven's sake!) I discovered Ashtanga Yoga, also called Power Yoga, and that was marvellous. It's the kind of yoga that's full-on and sweaty, a real workout. I loved it and it stopped some of the pain, loosened me up and kept me nice 'n' supple.

But even so I continued to get constantly injured. For three years I worked out five to seven times a week in the morning before work. I would get up at 5am and practice for an hour and a half almost every

day, and I continued to get injured repeatedly. Mostly back and neck muscles and it was usually from the most innocent of mistakes or slips.

Each injury forced me to stop practicing for a week or two. During this downtime it felt like my body was seizing up, like an engine run out of oil. After three years my daily yoga practice was impossible. I could no longer do any postures because my back was so weak.

Yoga is supposed to make you agile, strong, flexible and fit. Practiced with the frequency that I was practicing should have purified my body and mind. However it was as if I was driving with the handbrake on. I was on a downwards spiral. Nothing I did seemed to help. Something was badly wrong and I had no idea why. I thought exercise would make me better, especially exercise five to seven times per week, but it didn't, no matter how hard I tried, no matter how hard I wished.

It felt like the bones in my spine were a jigsaw puzzle put back together in the wrong order, any false move and it would knock out of shape. I complained to my doctors periodically and they told me there was nothing neither they, nor I, could do and I was told to "learn to live with the pain".

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With the yoga gone I was now in chronic and constant pain 24 hours a day, with no way to help myself. I hurt standing up. I hurt sitting down. The muscles in my back and neck were giving me major and chronic grief. I was aggressive, moody, grumpy and miserable most of the time; chronic pain does that.

Losing the ability to practice yoga was when I started to panic. Not being able to do any exercise was a serious problem; it was the only thing that had helped relieve the pain over the years of my dwindling health.

I was now scared for myself. The doctors were no help. Exercise was no longer an option, what now? For a while I just wished my pain away and sat on my hands doing nothing, but I was beyond the point of no return now. I hurt all the time. Doing nothing was no longer an option, so what next?

My posture was terrible, I was skinny and had a sunken caved-in chest, I realised the more I slouched, the more sunken my chest, the worse the digestive troubles got. Seems my ribs were digging into my internal organs causing me massive heartburn and acid indigestion.

I work in an office sitting in a chair all day, hunched over my keyboard. My back hurt all the time and I was intentionally tightening/gripping my back muscles to stop my back and chest from collapsing. This is a very poor postural habit and created even more problems as the muscles in my back and legs were perpetually locked rock-hard tight; after a couple years I could not un-lock them. I could not sit on a sofa as the relaxed posture caused major digestive troubles and constant back pain.

I didn't understand why, but it was straight-back chairs only. I couldn't sit on the floor, even for a minute otherwise the heartburn would go into overdrive. This was constant, nightmare, 24/7, nagging, perpetual, unfathomable and chronic heartburn that ruined my every moment and was all somehow made worse by my posture.

So I thought I had a problem with posture. (I did, but it was a symptom, not a cause). I discovered the 'Alexander Technique.' This strange system helps to identify and prevent harmful postural habits--of which I had many--that aggravate, stress and cause pain. You learn how to sit, walk, move, breathe, and relax your body and mind. It is a subtle and thoughtful discipline. It works through re-establishing the natural relationship between the head, neck and spine. It is rather like a re-education of how the mind and body interact together.

My first Alexander Technique lesson was pretty wild.

"Hello. I am Fumiaki san. You take coat and shoes off. You stand there."

"I'm here about my back."

"OK. Stand here please."

"My back really..."

"OK. Stand still here please."

"Do you want me to do anyth..."

"No, no, stand here for minute please. We talk soon."

The Japanese chap walked around me, looking at my body, checking me out from the back, front and side. After a couple minutes of fidgety standing still he stood behind me and just gently made some subtle adjustments to my neck, almost a caress. His touch to my neck was as calm a holding a telephone. Instantly I could feel my stiff body start to relax.

“In a minute, I ask you walk across room. I hold you neck. You relax. You let me hold you neck. I walk with you. OK?”

“OK.”

“OK, you walk across room now. I hold neck.”

And all the pain from my tight and tensed muscles dropped away. He walked me across the room holding my neck a softly as a kitten and it was like magic; all the pain evaporated. Spooky, startling and absolutely fabulous.

He took his hand away, my body slumped and the pain returned, but I'd had a glimpse of what this amazing technique could give me. A pain free life again. I was instantly hooked.

It's an amazing experience to be in pain 24/7 for years and years and for some bloke that you met five minutes ago to pick you up by the neck, oh so gently, and for the pain to disappear. He didn't even ask me any questions about what was wrong. At last, I thought, this is it. This is the answer to all my problems. Hooray!

Practice involved laying down on the floor with a book under my head, with my knees up and feet on the floor. You lie like this for 10 or 20 minutes and think of nothing, just being aware of your surroundings, your body and just letting go.

OK, it's a bit more complicated than that, but, essentially you are laying on the floor, with a book under your head, wishing the pain away. This is one of the most comfortable, stress-free positions your body can take and it is very restful. Muscles relax and go back to their natural pain-free position automatically. Eventually.

I spent the next three years (yes three years!) furiously practicing Alexander Technique in an effort to get better. I had lessons two or three times per week for those three long years. I practiced three times

a day on my own too: first thing in the morning, when I got back home from work and just before bed. If I missed a day I would suffer with even more low-grade, persistent, chronic, frustrating, infuriating, degrading, unending pain.

That's a huge effort to make, practicing every day, going to the lessons every week, not to mention the money, all of which came out of my pocket. It worked well, but well in a very limited way, it allowed me to continue working and keeping the semblance of having a normal life. Looking back now I can see that spending an hour a day lying down trying to wish my pain away was, well, wishful thinking in the extreme.

Don't get me wrong, I am a much better man for those three years of Alexander Technique. It is awesome when you get good at it. It made me totally body aware, it was great for calming my whizzing mind and my depression was gone. I am much calmer and more controlled now, but this was not the solution to my problems because after three years of daily practice, I was still in chronic and constant pain.

I didn't know any better. I didn't know anything else. I didn't know any other way. My doctors could not help. None of my friends knew what to do, or my work colleagues, or my family. I had never heard of alternative or holistic healthcare. I never thought I could learn about my body, educate myself about what was wrong and then take actions myself.

Today, I struggle to understand how or why I never even realised that alternative healthcare even existed. It's amazing that not one person I knew at that time ever suggested alternative health to me. My friends are friends, if they knew how to help me, they would have. They didn't know, just like me, ignorant, and ignorance sure hurts like hell.

### **3. Jack and the Beanstalk**

Up to this point I had been seeing the regular doctors in the UK (NHS) and private doctors on my medical insurance (BUPA) and looking