

## JUSTINE

*In this excerpt from **Breathe Better, Live in Wellness: Winning Your Battle Over Shortness of Breath**, we join Justine just after she was told she had COPD. She had never heard of COPD, so she went to the library to find out about it. In her research she found very little, but what she did find told her that there was no cure and life expectancy was 5-10 years. She figured she had already had COPD for three years, and decided she had to do something!*

“...I thought, ‘Well, I’m the only one left. My brother’s gone, my mother too, my dad, my grandparents.... You know, I’m pretty lucky. I’m still here and I’ve got a lot to look forward to. I’m not going to disappoint my family by being a horse’s ass and sitting here all depressed and feeling sorry for myself! I’ll just try my best and hope as my family in heaven looks down they will see that I am trying too --- to fight a good fight. *I’m going to do something about this!* I’m going to do whatever I can. Even if it takes a little therapy, I’ll see a psychologist. I’ll go and do whatever I can.’

“I decided I would do what I could to stay as well as I could for as long as I could. I decided I’d also pray for a miracle and healing.

“My doctor, an allergist / internist strongly recommended Pulmonary Rehab. Remember, I thought very highly of my doctor. You know, he had stood by me and encouraged me all the way. He told me, ‘You’re a very young person. You have to do what you can to help yourself.’”

*So what was it like for you at Rehab? How did you feel about that? Tell me about your first day.*

“You know, I’m kind of self-conscious. I was a little leery about going to Rehab and meeting everybody. I didn’t know *what* to expect. I didn’t know if there were going to be people in gym clothes. I mean, when you see people exercise on television... they’re in their little thongs!

“On my first day of Rehab I was scared. I thought, *Oh boy*. I looked at all the equipment and everything. I saw the Cardiac Rehab class finishing up, and they go *fast*. I didn’t think I’d be able to do it.

“But the girls on the rehab staff were *so* nice. Darlene said, ‘Don’t worry, you won’t be in *that* group!’ They [the staff] couldn’t have been any nicer. They’d say, ‘We’re going to try this and if you’re not comfortable, you just tell us and we’ll stop.’

“Now I go three days a week and it helps me a lot. It’s a good excuse to get out of the house, meet new people and sometimes I get the opportunity to help someone just coming into the program.

“One new person coming into the program, an older gentleman, said on his first day, ‘I can’t do this. They’re gonna kill me!’”

“I said, ‘No they won’t. They’ll take it very easy and you’ll be fine.’ Now he’s off oxygen and on maintenance [a continuing exercise program following completion of the basic course of treatment]. He is really neat. He has a wonderful sense of humor. I could see a change from an insecure, ‘Gee, I can’t do this. It would be so much easier to get it over with, to die,’ to ‘I feel better and I’m not as bad as I thought I was.’

“Pulmonary Rehab changes lives, it really does.”