

Coping With Survival

For the longest time after my Sudden Cardiac Arrest, I struggled with the significance of my survival. The simple odds of survival are remarkably narrow. According to the Sudden Cardiac Arrest Foundation, “The average survival rate from a Sudden Cardiac Arrest is 6% to 7% (Pre-hospital Emergency Care 1997; 1(1): 45-57). Knowing this, I’ve had many one-sided discussions with God asking why I was sent back and what really is my purpose? I have had some pretty tough dialogue, albeit one sided.

The hospital did a fantastic job of taking care of me while I was there. I was in Intensive Care for twenty four hours, and then placed into a cardio unit for observation and testing. I was poked, probed, x-rayed, surveyed and counseled.

Within the first eighteen hours, the hospital was so delighted with the Rapid Response that they asked if I was okay having the local Fox News station to come up and interview me in my intensive care room. By this time I had already been out of my bed and on my feet a couple of times. I knew that I was happy to be alive and breathing but I really had no idea what an incredible effort everyone contributed to get me to this point. The camera crew came in, I was interviewed in my bed and I made the evening news. I had my fifteen minutes of fame.

The complete gravity of what had happened to me had not yet hit home. I knew I had experienced a heart attack and was told by hospital staff that I would have to do things in a very different way. They had me up on my feet and moving around with in a day or so of admission. I felt safe around all of the competent people who seemed very interested in my well being. In fact, I had a sense of loss and a little trepidation as I left the hospital and returned to my home and the struggles that lay ahead for me.

People simply do not return to the routine of their lives after a heart attack or a sudden cardiac arrest. New challenges arise each day. Just dealing with the fact that I survived death was a source of conflict in my mind. I found that surviving simply wasn’t

enough. I had to cope with all of the new changes to my body and physical regimen. I had medications that wrecked havoc with how I felt from day to day. I had to overcome depression and deal with why I was spared and asked to return to life. I began to think of my daily routine as coping with survival.