

Talking Points from SICK GIRL by Amy Silverstein

In an interview, Amy Silverstein can discuss:

- *Take Your Meds and Shut Up* – Reaction to her book’s hardcover publication and the debate it stirred; the critics and supporters; fellow patients’ response; and the taboo about honesty in illness it revealed;
- *The Mask of Wellness* – Living with chronic illness; the benefits and consequences of looking great on the outside and feeling sick on the inside; the compelled silence, the forced optimism, and pressure to be ever cheery;
- *Grateful and Grinding* – The duality of living sick, scared, and exhilarated since the age of 24—the conflict between deep appreciation for her astounding good fortune in being alive, and acknowledging how tough it is to live in a heart-transplant body;
- *Waking Up* – To your life’s passion, purpose and meaning: moving in the direction of your soul right now; why wait for something—open-heart surgery or empty nest syndrome—to drive you toward fulfillment?
- *The Complex Dance of Doctor/Patient Communication* – How to be a smart, self-advocating patient who is a 50% partner with the doctor;
- *Gods, Quacks, or Something in Between* – Medical treatment as a best-guess science and doctors as “friends” or not; a tremendously intimate relationship with limits; how to avoid being a victim of misdiagnosis and handle errors;
- *After the Miracle Surgery* – Living as a sick person, always on the edge of a medical emergency that she hides from her young son and friends, and often, even her husband;
- *Heart Transplantation as More Than a “Simple” Miracle Portrayed in the Media* – An eye-opening first-hand account of the nuances and complexities of heart transplant life; the truth about the efficacy of heart transplants; and what it means to outlive transplant life expectancy—when a doctor says of her longevity, “We’re in uncharted waters but I’m happy to navigate them with you.”
- *The Terrible Price Paid for Dumbing Down* – The miscalculation of risk, and how smart, savvy patients create themselves;
- *The List of Intentions* – She wrote: *I will not be like other transplant patients; I will not live scared, I will never take Scott for granted...* and those she was able to keep;
- *Not in the Eye of the Beholder* – How she hid her scar, her “flaw,” for years before learning to accept it, and how we perceive beauty and our “ugly body parts”;
- *Organ Transplant Winners and Losers* – The mind-bending delicate balance between being sick enough to receive what you need in order to live and living long enough to receive what you’ve been waiting for; the emotional aspect of the fair and regulated distribution of organs;
- *How Heart Transplant Waiting Lists are Made and Managed* – Amy is on the Board of the United Network for Organ Sharing, the federal contractor that makes and enforces all regulations regarding organ donation and procurement.