

Total Knee Replacement: Audrey



OVERVIEW :

Audrey had been struggling with a moderate to severe disability stemming from a major knee injury suffered 35 years earlier. In response to this accident, Audrey had had surgery to remove the medial portion of the cartilage in her left knee. Since then, she had been walking around with bone on bone in part of her left knee joint. For two years before her surgery, we worked as hard as we could to reduce her pain and to increase her level of functioning in order to avoid surgery. This included craniosacral treatments to re-align her pelvis and leg bones, energy work to discharge shock from her lower extremities and central nervous system, soft tissue treatments, changes to her posture and gait, etc.

While we did manage to reduce the intensity of her pain and delay the surgery, it became clear that she would need a total knee replacement in order to have the quality of life that she desired. I worked with her for several months before the surgery doing “prehab,” which involved teaching her numerous ways to manage her pain, her anesthesia, and the inevitable disorientation of a replacement surgery. After the surgery, I worked with her intensively in the hospital and then at home for two and a half weeks. She sailed through her rehab and is now back to playing golf, taking long walks with her dog, and leading an active life.

Doug was terrific; he was steady, calming, comforting, and knowledgeable. It helped that I already had worked with him before the surgery, so I knew what to expect. Doug has a personality that was so light, that was going to keep things positive. Also, he gave me credit for tons of stuff; I needed that kind of steady encouragement. Every time I got negative about something, we'd talk about it and Doug would just turn it around and show me the positive side of it. With great patience he would explain what things meant and reassure me that I was going in the right direction. This is just a basic part of his personality and it was such a big help to me.

THE DETAILS :

I had worked with Audrey for two years prior to her knee surgery, helping her learn to change her gait and to learn to manage the pain from a severely arthritic and misaligned knee joint. We had some success at helping her manage her pain episodically when she would have a flare-up, but the long-term success just wasn't going to be there from my clinical treatments because several decades of bone-on-bone in the knee joint had resulted in too much degeneration. Her very strong misalignment made everything significantly worse.

Prehab: I worked extensively with Audrey before her surgery on pain management techniques so that she could self-medicate without drugs in order to deal with the pain of the surgery, which was considerable for her. The self-care or self-treatment techniques included breath work, how to touch her knee effectively, and how to work with her body's energetic field in order to disperse the pain and to keep her energy cycling fully. This did indeed prevent the pain from building up and snowballing in her system.

Personally I was most involved in the prehab part of it, working hard, trying to absorb all I could. I was particularly interested in the pain management techniques; I was really hoping to get by with less drugs and medication. I would encourage anyone getting a replacement surgery to learn the pain management skills and then practice them. Sometimes Doug would have to remind me to use them, but they always worked for me. Doug also helped reduce the impact of the medications that I was taking. The drugs helped with the pain in the beginning, but they seemed to make me more anxious and less clear-headed. Both side effects reduced when Doug treated me.

Hospital Care: Audrey had a successful surgery, but was quite negatively impacted by the anesthesia. This included disorientation and repeated episodes of vomiting, often with no warning. She would just be fine and then suddenly be overwhelmed with nausea, dramatic systemic weakness, and general post-surgical distress. During the time that I treated her in the hospital, I worked directly with her central nervous system to help it clear and discharge the anesthesia. I also helped her energetically orient so that she could come back and feel like herself. This allowed her to start the long process of integrating this replacement knee into her whole system. We did a great deal of work using the pain management skills that we had discussed before her surgery. Audrey found them to be very effective.

When I was in the hospital I certainly used what I had learned and practiced during the prehab; it was extremely helpful. It was very comforting to have Doug there in the hospital. He helped me manage my anxiety, my uncertainty as to the eventual outcome. Doug's experience was crucial here; he had a lot of knowledge about why things happened and what they meant. Because he had been through it before with others, Doug could reassure me that I wasn't going backwards and that nothing was wrong. I loved his positive re-enforcement that a whole range of things were progressing as they should. Our work together really helped to alleviate the fear and anxiety that I had; I always felt calmer and more peaceful after a visit from Doug.

Our integration work was huge. I have this artificial part in my body, but I don't even think of it as foreign anymore. I went into the surgery thinking that this was going to be a big problem because I had friends who had had replacement surgeries. They came out saying that, "it doesn't hurt, but it just doesn't feel normal, it just doesn't feel like a part of me." We worked so hard to accept the new knee into my body and to really make it a part of me. We specifically did this, on purpose. It wasn't just a by-product of something else that we were doing; it was part of the original goal right from the beginning. Doug realized how important this would be much more than I did. Only afterwards did I realize that I wouldn't have had the excellent level of function that I have now, if we hadn't done this work. The bottom line is that it doesn't feel foreign at all to me. I'm soooooo happy that it worked! Integrating my knee into the whole of me, welcoming it as a new member of "Team Audrey," was a huge part of the reason that I've had such wonderful results.

Homecare and Rehab: For a period of two weeks I did daily home visits with Audrey. We worked a hard to decrease the swelling and increase mobility of the knee. We also addressed the tissue shock in and around the knee and the strain in her leg when she put weight on it. I was able to help Audrey a great deal by answering her questions and concerns about her progress as well as reassuring her about the potential complications. She really appreciated the information and welcomed new perspectives on everything from infection to the course of rehab with the physical therapists to monitoring and supporting her generally increasing movements as she went along. This was an extremely effective time for our work. Audrey made very rapid progress and had remarkably little pain, far less than she was led to believe she would have during her home rehabilitation.

Homecare was wonderful; it went on a lot longer than I had thought it would because it was so beneficial. Doug's work kept me on an even keel. He relieved my anxiety and helped keep my energy together and focused. His explanations helped me to understand my healing process. I have a tendency to try to force things. Instead of trying to make my body always be better and better, I learned how to relax and let my body heal at its own pace. Doug had a lot of confidence in the wisdom of my body; as I learned to trust my body's inherent wisdom and healing power, my knee began to heal more easily and more quickly. My friends, without knowing what Doug did, definitely recognized the high level of support I had from Doug; they could see a big difference in me after each visit and were clear that he greatly assisted me in my recovery.

Final note: Working with Audrey was such a pleasure. From the onset she understood that she could have a positive impact on her own condition. On a deep level, Audrey understood that she mattered in her own healing process. Accordingly, she was receptive to everything that I could do for her or teach her that might help. Audrey worked tirelessly and diligently on her own behalf. Now she is having a wonderful time living her life more fully, doing the things she loves without the limitation of painful knee. Way to go Audrey!!

Working with Doug gave me results that were way beyond, way better than what I ever expected, what I ever thought was possible. The preparation and then the follow-through were invaluable. Half of it was my effort and half was Doug's help. If you're willing to meet him half way, it will be a very successful relationship. I would recommend him without reservation for anyone who is having any type of surgery.

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