

Date

Generous Donor  
123 Caring St  
Lovely, ON X0X 0X0

Dear <Salutation>,

If a doctor told you that you have renal failure, your likely reaction would be fear and shock. But that wasn't the case for me.

Honestly, I was confused. I asked the voice on the other side of the phone: *"What is a renal?"*

It just goes to show how little most people know about kidney disease, even someone like me, who has been in and out of the hospital since I was a little kid.

**I was in my early 20s when I learned I had kidney failure.** As a child, I often experienced terrible bouts of joint pain. People always thought they were growing pains, but it was just brutal. I would cry for days.

Despite all of it, I enjoyed an active lifestyle. It wasn't until much later that I found out I had lupus, an autoimmune condition affecting tissues and organs, that eventually led to my kidney disease.

The day I learned my kidneys were failing, my life completely changed. But not the way you might expect. I'll explain, but first, I want to say this:

I am sharing my story with you today because your extraordinarily generous support of The Kidney Foundation has helped to bring hope and change the lives of so many people living with kidney disease in Canada.

**First Name, will you give a special gift today to help fund vital programs that ensure kidney patients across our country have access to the information and support they need?**

One of the programs your gift will directly impact is the peer support group I have been a part of for some time now.

The support group connects people living with kidney disease with others who share their experiences. It's an incredibly valuable resource that offers patients, their families, and caregivers support that goes beyond medical care.

But I'll be honest — when I learned of my diagnosis, I didn't feel like I needed to join a support group to help me cope. It was just never something I thought was for me.

Instead of seeking support, I did what I do best — I focused on what needed to be done. I started researching and educating myself about my condition, and learning about treatment options, diets and lifestyle changes. I always considered myself very lucky to have an amazing family and lots of good friends who have always been a source of encouragement and support for me.

**Initially, the diagnosis came as a shock, but once I knew I wasn't going to die and that I could live on dialysis, I felt better. I got on with life.**

After some time of being on medication and dialysis, I was fortunate to see my kidney function rebound. I got off dialysis and lived with chronic kidney disease for the next ten years. But there was underlying damage. There was no doubt that eventually my kidneys would fail again.

The second time it happened, it came fast. I came home from work one day and just started feeling really ill and nauseated. I ended up going to the emergency at my local hospital. The bloodwork showed that my creatinine was through the roof, and I was hospitalized right away.

I eventually had a PD catheter inserted so I wouldn't have to go to a clinic to receive dialysis. It was great to be able to manage my own care. I could travel and go on camping trips, which I really enjoy doing. I would just throw a few supplies in my car or take the dialysis machine if I was planning to go away for longer periods of time.

When my kidneys failed for the second time, I was in my 30s and was looking to apply for the registered disability savings program. I needed help navigating the system and filling out the paperwork, so I thought *I'll call The Kidney Foundation.*

**That's when my journey with The Kidney Foundation peer support program began.**

I ended up having a long conversation with the peer support program coordinator, Satya. It was the *first time* I'd spoken to someone who shared my experience of living with kidney disease. It turned out Satya was close to my age, and we had a lot in common.

When she asked me if I'd be interested in doing one-on-one peer support and sharing my experience to help others, I agreed.

The experience has been lifechanging. I've made many friends I would never have had if I didn't join the support group. Some of them have quickly become my closest peers.

**Sharing an illness and being able to talk about it forms a special bond.**

And I've come to learn it's OK to be sad about your diagnosis. It's not embarrassing. It really is something to mourn. Thinking that you may not be able to live the life you wanted or do the things you planned, like travelling around the world, running a marathon or having children, can be hard to come to terms with. This is especially true if you don't have many close family members or friends to lean on.

The group offers emotional support, but it is so much more than that. It provides a lot of everyday, practical advice about how to live your best life while living with kidney disease.

For example, we coach people on how to choose a dialysis option that works best with their lifestyle, so they don't have to give up on doing the things they love. Living with kidney disease doesn't have to be limiting. Despite needing dialysis, many people are living good lives — going to work, exercising, playing sports, and even travelling abroad.

It wasn't until I got involved with the group that I realized how helpful it can be. Even if I was managing fine, there were always things I could be doing better. Like making traveling easier or finding a tip on an in-centre hemo clinic that the government will pay for, even if you are out of the country.

**Being diagnosed with kidney disease is devastating for most people. It can be a daunting and emotionally overwhelming experience. Initially, it can seem really, really bad.** You might think *I'll have to go to the clinic three days a week to receive dialysis. What if I have to give up my job? How am I going to support myself and my family? Will I be able to afford medication? Am I going to be sick all the time?*

That's why The Kidney Foundation is so incredibly valuable. It provides expertise, knowledge and hope to people living with kidney disease. It also provides much-needed financial support through the Short-Term Financial Assistance (STFA) program to help pay for medication, travel to medical appointments and other out-of-pocket costs.

For those who need a kidney transplant, the peer support group provides encouragement and inspiration. Connecting with others who have undergone a successful transplant and are able to live a quality life can bring a tremendous amount of hope.

**The Kidney Foundation of Canada is a source of support, information and guidance to thousands of people living with kidney disease and their families across the country.**

But the only way the Foundation can continue to offer these valuable resources is with your support.

**Will you send a special gift today to ensure programs like the peer support group continue to be available to thousands of people affected by kidney disease in every province of our country – and beyond?**

Since the pandemic, the support groups have moved online and have grown in size. Virtual support enables people across Ontario, including rural areas, to attend. We've even had people join from other provinces and out of the country. It's amazing how far reaching the group is.

We now have virtual groups running in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia as well. It's a lot easier for people to join online. For some people, it feels overwhelming to show up in person; they are just not ready for it. The online group allows them to "hide in the crowd" until they become more comfortable. And for those who would otherwise have to do a long commute, online support groups make life a lot easier.

**First Name, it's thanks to your incredible generosity that kidney patients have a reliable place to turn.** You make it possible for them to access accurate information, comforting peer support, and helpful advice on how to live their best lives while also managing their condition.

Kidney disease can really take its toll and wear you down. But it doesn't have to stop you from living a good life, nor doing the things you enjoy the most. You don't have to give up on your dream of sailing, taking a road trip or travelling overseas for a vacation. I am living proof that kidney disease can be managed — and so are thousands of other patients who are living active and fulfilling lives.

Thank you again for your generous support of The Kidney Foundation and for bringing hope to so many. And please, send your special gift today.

With my sincere thanks,

[signature]

Joe Gallagher

P.S. Please give as generously as you can today to support vital resources like the peer support group for the 4 million Canadians living with kidney disease. Thank you!