

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR: *Galina Kotlyar, 43*

Holistic healing helped colitis sufferer who now heals others

By LIZ BEST
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It's not exactly rags to riches, but Galina Kotlyar tells a pretty good story about how she came to America and took on the traditional medical community.

The daughter of an interior decorator father and an engineer mother, Kotlyar was 17 when her family left their hometown of Odesa, Russia, as Jewish refugees. By the time they reached New York City she was 18 and fighting an agonizing stomachache.

Like any teenager, Kotlyar pretended nothing was wrong.

"Because I was young and stupid, I kept denying my illness and thinking that one fine day it would go away," Kotlyar said.

By the time her illness finally caught up with her a few years later, she was suffering from high fever, dehydration and severe weight loss. She also was pregnant, and married to a physician.

Her diagnosis was grim: ulcerative colitis. She was treated with antibiotics, steroids and anti-inflammatory drugs. Her daughter Madeline, now 23, was born healthy. Within a few years, doctors told Kotlyar that she needed major invasive surgery to remove her colon and rectum, and that she would be dependent on a colostomy bag for the rest of her life.

She was only 27 years old.

"I refused to live with the bag," said Kotlyar, who is now married to her second husband Felix, and has a son Michael, 18.

Kotlyar met chiropractor-turned-holistic health-care guru Dr. Bernard Jensen and, instead of surgery, she started a program of detoxification through various healing foods and minerals.

"After one month, my colon was healed. There was a better way than taking medications and going for surgery," said Kotlyar, who still suffers from periodic colon problems, but hasn't been sick since moving to South Florida three years ago.

Kotlyar says she spent more than \$250,000 traveling the world



BILL INGRAM/Staff Photographer

to study alternative healing methods. She's tried everything from volcanic minerals to liquid meal replacements. She eats a variety of meats, fresh fruits and vegetables, and tailors her diet to the seasons and to her monthly cycle.

"I've experimented with everything out there," she said, adding that the worst part of having a chronic medical condition is worrying about another flare up.

"Now I'm free of fear, and I think that's the best part," she said.

Because of her personal experiences, Kotlyar has devoted her life to helping others find relief from a

variety of medical problems, in decidedly nontraditional methods. She has a host of degrees in nutrition and diet and counsels patients on how to improve their health through alternative methods.

Kotlyar opened the Total Health Center in New York City in 1987, and opened an office in West Palm Beach last March. Her patients participate in their recovery. Kotlyar stresses that there is no magic bullet, and the treatment is different for each person.

"I am trying to educate people as to what triggered their condition and what it takes to get well,"

she said. "Most people lack the desire to get involved and just go to the doctor. Then you are giving the power to get well to someone else."

In her spare time, Kotlyar practices yoga and lifts weights to counteract the effects of osteoporosis which was brought on by the steroids she received years ago.

"I decided that I have to take my life into my own hands. Now, when I say something to my patients, I'm very confident that it works, because I've tried everything myself."

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Medical nutritionist Galina Kotlyar's colitis illness as a teenager led her to seek alternative healing methods, instead of the traditional medications and surgery. Today, she specializes in holistic healing and first opened Total Health Center in New York City in 1987. She opened her West Palm office last March.