

My Festive Liver Transplant

Early in 2024, I was diagnosed with end stage liver disease, so a liver transplant was in the cards for me. MedStar Georgetown University Hospital has extensive experience doing liver transplants. When I presented to them in early February, they accepted me as a patient. In great hope, I waited for a liver to become available.

On a Friday afternoon, at the end of April, a kind hospital scheduler called with happy news: “We have a liver for you and would like to operate on Saturday. Are you free tomorrow?” Stunned, I managed to summon a light-hearted reply: “I have a few social appointments, but I’ll be able to reschedule those. Count me in for a liver transplant at the hospital tomorrow.” That conversation set the tone for what happened next.

Knowing that I’d be spending two weeks in the hospital recovering from the surgery, I started planning my time there. I love playing ukulele, so I decided to bring three ukuleles to the hospital. I envisioned making a series of YouTube music videos and giving free ukulele lessons from my hospital bed. I was able to do both.

I received my new liver that Saturday and started making YouTube music videos the following Wednesday. Even with my body intricately entangled with wires and tubes, I was ready for my [first music recital](#). A few days later, when my two brothers came to visit, we giggled and shot a YouTube video titled [“Tiny Hospital Concert – Corinna, Corinna.”](#) In that video, my brother Jay laughs as he whimsically hands me a plastic breathing device in the midst of my musical performance. At the end, I triumphantly throw my arms in the air.

Music is an expression of the life force. After major surgery, I made the decision to use music to spur my recovery and connect with others. I included links to these videos in my GoFundMe email updates so my supporters didn’t have to ask me how I was feeling. Watching the music videos, they could see and hear the vitality in that hospital room.

You do not choose the cards you are dealt, but you can choose how to respond to them. I had the most wonderful time with my liver transplant. On my last day in the hospital, I recorded my best YouTube music video, [“The Encore Hospital Concert.”](#) My devoted friend Eric Olson—picking me up from the hospital—shot this video.

Since then, I count my blessings every day. I was dealt a tough hand with my medical challenges, but the universe conspired to help me. I will never forget how privileged I was to receive a transplant, especially so quickly after diagnosis.

As a backdrop to all of this, I spent time in sober reflection. Reflecting upon the person whose life ended – and who wanted me to have their liver. The gift of a vital organ is a

gift like no other. I reflected about my talented surgeon, Dr. Brian M. Nguyen, who drove to work that Saturday morning to save my life. Just another day at work for him. I reflected upon the hospital's organ procurement team, who went to great lengths to procure the liver that saved my life. These valiant people have never met me, but they desperately wanted me to live. I wish I could shake each of their hands. Each of their golden hands.

Life is precious, short, and fragile. Celebrate each day. Make every day count. And most importantly, be kind. Kindness is the only thing that keeps us alive.

Phil Shapiro works as the Public Geek at Takoma Park Maryland Library. In the same week he received a new liver, he also received a national award from Library Journal magazine – for moving the library profession forward.

<https://tinyurl.com/libraryjournalaward>

<https://opensource.com/users/pshapiro>

On my last day in the hospital after my liver transplant, I shot this music video from my hospital bed.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QSUaaT9yZ8Q>

After being released from the hospital, I shot this dance video from the rehab facility I was staying in.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xmsZ8ZuEZE>

To celebrate going back to work at my public library job at the end of Sept, 2024, I shot this music video.

[Simple Simon Says octave uke 2](#)

A 4.5 minute film was produced about my positive experiences with my liver transplant. Viewable at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0z9zyqzkyyk>

Grateful thanks to the many of you who have contributed to my GoFundMe. I am leaving my [GoFundMe](#) open, as I have about \$2,000 of hospital bills that remain outstanding.

[My octave ukulele videos](#)

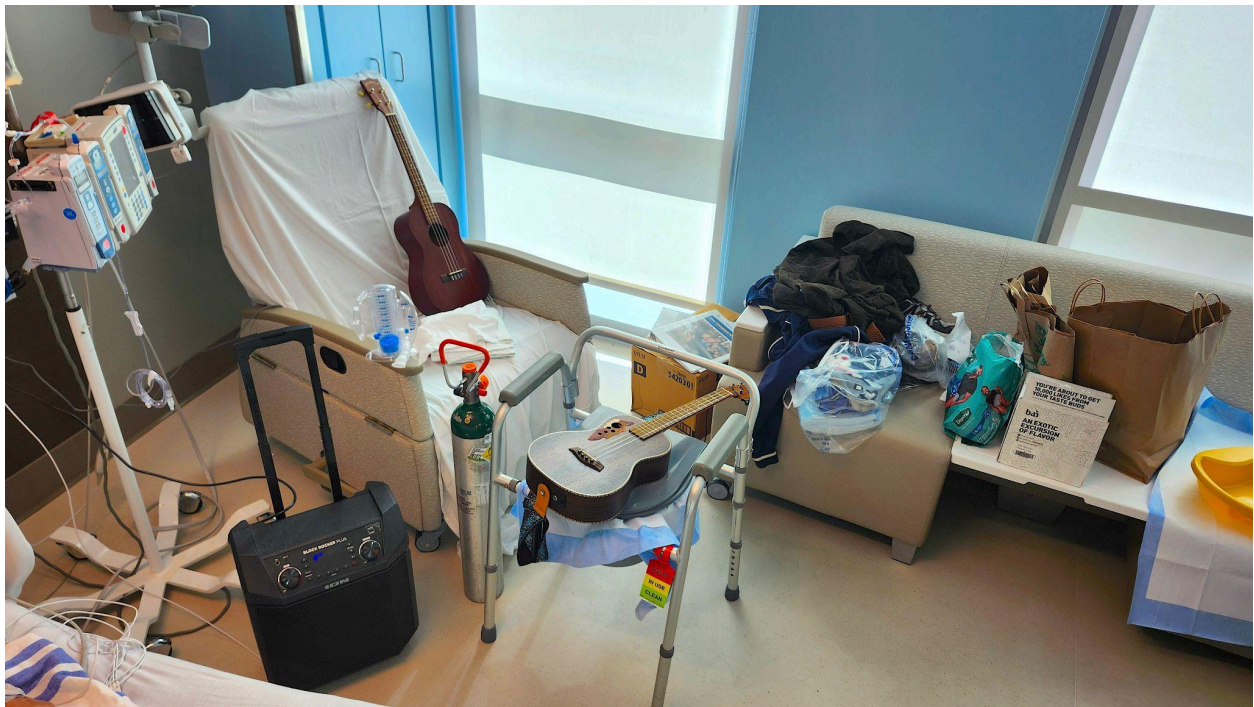
[My Bob Dylan uke playalong videos.](#)

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Here are 25 popular books on positive psychology, covering topics from well-being and resilience to gratitude and happiness:

1. **Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being** – Martin Seligman
2. **Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment** – Martin Seligman
3. **The How of Happiness: A New Approach to Getting the Life You Want** – Sonja Lyubomirsky
4. **Mindset: The New Psychology of Success** – Carol S. Dweck
5. **Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance** – Angela Duckworth
6. **Positivity: Top-Notch Research Reveals the 3-to-1 Ratio That Will Change Your Life** – Barbara Fredrickson
7. **The Happiness Advantage: The Seven Principles of Positive Psychology That Fuel Success and Performance at Work** – Shawn Achor
8. **The Power of Meaning: Crafting a Life That Matters** – Emily Esfahani Smith
9. **The Upside of Your Dark Side: Why Being Your Whole Self—Not Just Your “Good” Self—Drives Success and Fulfillment** – Todd Kashdan and Robert Biswas-Diener
10. **Resilient: How to Grow an Unshakable Core of Calm, Strength, and Happiness** – Rick Hanson and Forrest Hanson
11. **The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World** – Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu, and Douglas Carlton Abrams
12. **Option B: Facing Adversity, Building Resilience, and Finding Joy** – Sheryl Sandberg and Adam Grant
13. **Big Potential: How Transforming the Pursuit of Success Raises Our Achievement, Happiness, and Well-Being** – Shawn Achor
14. **Man’s Search for Meaning** – Viktor Frankl
15. **Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us** – Daniel H. Pink
16. **Happier: Learn the Secrets to Daily Joy and Lasting Fulfillment** – Tal Ben-Shahar
17. **The Art of Happiness: A Handbook for Living** – Dalai Lama and Howard Cutler
18. **Radical Acceptance: Embracing Your Life With the Heart of a Buddha** – Tara Brach
19. **Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself** – Kristin Neff
20. **Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones** – James Clear

21. **The Little Book of Gratitude: Create a Life of Happiness and Wellbeing by Giving Thanks** – Robert Emmons
22. **Happier, No Matter What: Cultivating Hope, Resilience, and Purpose in Hard Times** – Tal Ben-Shahar
23. **Peak: Secrets from the New Science of Expertise** – Anders Ericsson and Robert Pool
24. **Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life** – Martin Seligman
25. **Positive Psychology in a Nutshell: The Science of Happiness** – Ilona Boniwell



▶ "Yes sir, that's my baby" - A Thousand Clowns (1965)