

# It's important to learn how to listen to your body

KENT

By Elyse Sadtler

The modern world is busy. There are appointments to keep, schedules to manage, problems to solve. In the hustle and bustle, it's easy to ignore the subtle ways our bodies communicate with us.

In a talk on Saturday, Feb. 11, at the Kent Memorial Library, Deborah Bain, registered nurse and founder of Prism Health Advocates, emphasized the importance of paying attention to what your body tells you.

"Listen to your body. It's a lot smarter than you are," Bain said. Feeling thirst, hunger, fatigue or pain are all ways the body communicates. Learning to listen to these signs is a valuable skill.

"When you wake up in the morning, get into the habit of taking an inventory of how you feel. Take a few minutes to perform a head-to-toe evaluation," she suggested. "Over time, you will become more in tune with your body."

To illustrate her point, Bain listed several examples of ways your body might be trying to get your attention. Fatigue, or unrelenting exhaustion, might indicate diabetes or cardiac issues. Chronic itching of the throat and ears? This could mean an imbalance of the bacteria that live in the intestines. What about cracked and chapped lips? This could be a sign of dehydration or a vitamin B deficiency.

"It is vital that you pay attention to any changes that are out of the ordinary, especially if they persist," Bain said. "If you think something is wrong, act on it."

Scheduling an appointment with your primary care physician is a good place to start if you have noticed a change in your body. If you feel uncomfortable or are not

satisfied with a doctor's conclusion, get a second opinion.

"You alone are in charge of you," she said.

Asserting yourself within the health care system can be intimidating. As a professional who has worked in the health-care field for more than 35 years, Bain founded Prism Health Advocates in July 2016. The goal of this firm is to assist clients in navigating all aspects of the health care system.

"The way it's structured, doctors just do not have the time to spend helping patients find their way around the complexities of the system," she explained.

Bain and her sister and business

partner, Victoria Colombatto, provide advocacy and navigation services to clients. Medical bill cross-checking, end-of-life planning, individually tailored and research-based health-care options, and even attending doctor appointments with clients are among the services offered by their firm.

At the end of the talk, Bain answered questions about the future of the health-care system.

While she said there is no way to really know what's going to happen, experts in the field have expressed concern about what will happen if the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is repealed.

Colombatto related a personal story of being diagnosed with breast cancer over a decade ago and undergoing treatment before the ACA was in place. Shortly after the treatment she was dropped from her health insurance due to a job loss. She called insurance companies and pleaded with them to provide her coverage, offering to pay any premium they asked. She was denied each time due to her pre-existing condition. It was three years before she was able to get health-care coverage again.

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