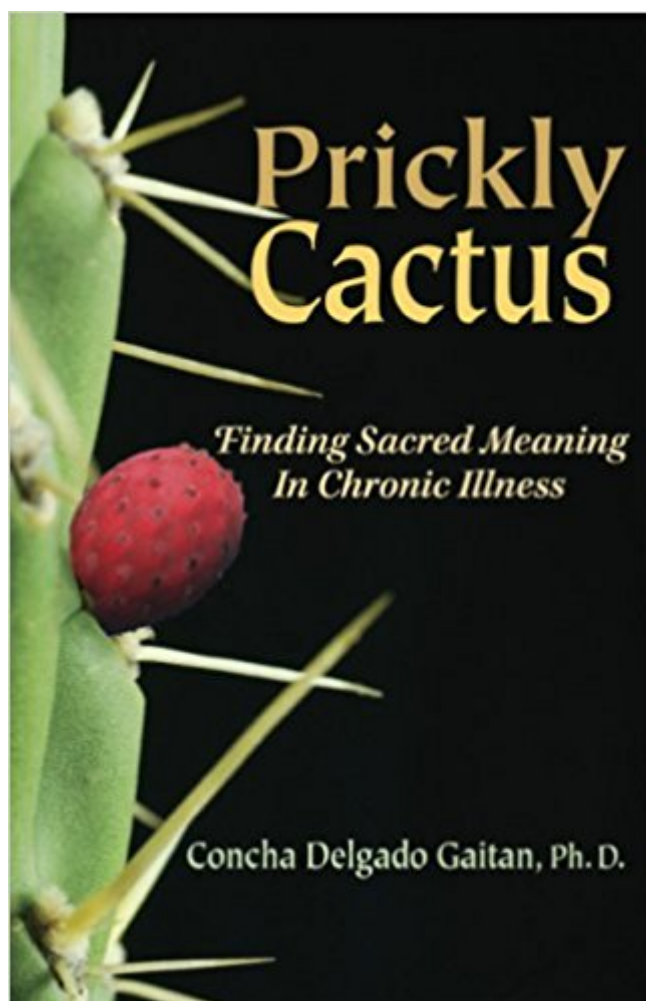


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# Prickly Cactus: Finding Meaning In Chronic Illness



## Synopsis

A portrait of disability due to lupus (SLE), and the eventual healing of body, mind, and spirit through medical treatment, physical therapy, and spiritual practice. It offers inspirational and informative insight into both Western and Eastern healing modalities, and into the vital role of family and friends in recovering from a chronic autoimmune disease that afflicts millions of Americans, especially women. At the height of her thriving career as a university professor, researcher, prolific writer, and influential advocate for education, Concha Delgado Gaitan was suddenly stricken with unbearable pain and partial paralysis. Diagnosed with systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), she began the long and arduous process of taking control of her own healing. This entailed first creating a language to describe her physical symptoms, accessing the wisdom of traditional and alternative healers, and building a supportive community in which she could literally reinvent herself, transforming her life and overcoming adversity.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A practical and invaluable book for healing chronic illness by listening to and following the deep wisdom of the body, mind, and spirit connection. Concha Delgado Gaitan powerfully illustrates the role and strength of one's community in supporting health and healing, and demonstrates the opportunity that illness provides in clarifying what truly is important in life. --Angeles Arrien, Ph.D., Cultural Anthropologist, author of *The Second Half of Life*

Concha Delgado Gaitan is an award-winning professor and researcher in Anthropology and Education. She has also worked in the field of public health in culturally diverse communities, combining that interest with her dedication to issues of social justice in education. Dr. Delgado Gaitan lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with her husband, Dudley Thompson, and their cat Sofia.

*Prickly Cactus* is the memoir of a woman stricken with a crippling illness in the midst of a competitive career. She must come to terms with the conflict between her physical limitations and her expectations of being a fully productive member of society. The book's title is an analogy of life as the nopal cactus, thorny on the surface, but with a sweet and nutritious core. Delgado Gaitan chronicles how she has come to deal with chronic pain and uncertainty by valuing moments of relaxation and joy and appreciating the essential role of community and faith in a meaningful life. As the child of immigrants who prized education and hard work, Delgado Gaitan appreciated the need to learn a new language, and to be an active participant in bettering her community. She pursued a career in anthropology, and was in the middle of a demanding academic schedule of teaching, travel, and writing when diagnosed with the autoimmune disease lupus. Delgado Gaitan poignantly describes how an illness affects everything about a person's life, far beyond the obvious physical and emotional impact. She details professional, economic, social and spiritual challenges. Ultimately her disease and other events led to a series of personal losses, including giving up her career and ending a long-term relationship. She begins her recovery by seeking a new vocabulary to describe her symptoms and educating herself about her condition, then taking charge of her own healing process while staying open to approaches beyond conventional Western medicine. Complementing this approach, she turns to friends and family, finding support, guidance, and faith. *Prickly Cactus* is a portrait of one woman's pain, frustration, courage, perseverance, and hope. Its insights into the many facets of illness will help others who are suffering or witnessing the struggles of a loved one. It will also inspire readers coping with loss, redefining their identity, having doubts about faith, or facing indecision in turning to others for support.

I highly recommend *Prickly Cactus: Finding Sacred Meaning in Chronic Illness*. In this book, the author not only shows us her strength of character through her work and commitment, through her coming as a child to the U.S. and learning to navigate a new language and change of traditions, she also gives us a time period, a history, and she shows us one woman struggling through a health care system, both supportive and non-supportive, to come to a place of healing within herself. This

book is a guide. It might save your life. It certainly teaches the concept of "rest," of nourishment, renewal and balance. She writes that: "Miracles are not things we wish for; they are inspired by our freedom from fear." One of her healers, Luis DelAgUILA says to her, "Turn and face the beast. That's the way to heal the immune system - you can't run from it anymore. You'll find that what looks like the beast is just another part of you that begs to be integrated into your being." We each need to turn and face the beast. This book offers guidance to inspire each one of us with the courage, faith, and belief to do just that and to create a community of vitality to nourish ourselves as we derive our own sense of healing of body, mind, and spirit. This is a book of passion and compassion. We learn about "extension of love" as we read her words and through them determine to increase our own connections and extend and acknowledge a deeper empathy and community for us all.

Prickly Cactus recounts the real life story of Concha Delgado Gaitan and learning to live a meaningful life despite the burdens of a chronic illness. It includes personal family stories as well as ways to improve one's life.

Why does the human body break down so easily? "Prickly Cactus: Finding Sacred Meaning in Chronic Illness" details author Concha Delgado Gaitan's battle with systemic lupus erythematosus, or SLE. It struck her in the prime of her life; she had to fight this chronic illness in order to keep the life she had worked so hard for. Written to inspire readers to fight their own illnesses by sharing a bit of the author's battle spirit, "Prickly Cactus" is a fine read for any who face a disease that nags them daily.

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