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**Jacksonville  
Contact Information:**  
Patti Langenbach  
(800) 741-0110  
(904) 733-8500  
[patti@ostomymcp.com](mailto:patti@ostomymcp.com)  
Support group meets the 3rd Sunday of each month 3 p.m.  
4836 Victor Street  
Next Meeting: **Nov 19th**

**Gainesville Support Group  
Contact info:**  
Brinda Watson (352) 373-1266  
Jean Haskins (352) 495-2626  
Meets the 1st Sunday of each month (except Holidays)  
at Hope Lodge 2121 SW 16th St  
Gainesville, FL  
Next meeting: **Nov 5th at 2pm**

**Ocala Support  
Contact info:**  
Lynn Parsons (352) 245-3114  
[www.ostomyocala.com](http://www.ostomyocala.com)  
Meets the 2nd Sunday of each month (except July & Aug) at 2 p.m. at the Sheriff's Station 3260 SE 80th Street between Ocala and Belleview.  
Next Meeting: **Nov 12th**

**Citrus County Support Group**  
Meets third Sunday of each month at 2:00 PM in the Seven Rivers Regional Medical Center, 6201 N. Suncoast Blvd., Crystal River, FL 34428, in the Community Room of the Medical Office Building  
Next Meeting: **Nov 19th**

**Amelia Island Area  
Ostomy Support Group**  
(904) 310-9054  
Meets second Monday of each month at 6:30pm UF North Campus  
UF Health North 15255 Max Leggett Parkway Jacksonville, FL 32218 (Meeting Room 3-4)  
Free parking  
Next Meeting: **Nov 13th**

## “Gutsy’s FAB Gab-About: Stories of Ostomy ‘Glories/Gories!’”

“Speak Out and YOUR WORDS WILL Be Heard!”

By Linda Blumberg AKA “Mrs. Lips”



Well, our next “red” hot stoma story is also “no *slouch* just ‘cause she continues to wear a pouch!”...Who will be next to regale us with her ostomy tale?...we give pause, followed by wondrous, thunderous applause for: Australian ileostomate blogger Laura Z. “little guy,” whose website: <https://stomalicious.wordpress.com> ...”stomalicious: Spreading awareness of IBD, and inspiring others living life and travelling the world with an Ostomy”...[Linda’s 10.11 year old ileostomy stoma, “R”esident ‘Gutsy’ <of Linda’s abdomen> will provide “asides,”... as we share their “ride!”...herein is their story, reprinted with

permission, as shared with Gutsy...

Laura Z. “little guy’s” story/ongoing blog: website: <https://stomalicious.wordpress.com> ...



“stomalicious: Spreading awareness of IBD, and inspiring others living life and traveling the world with an Ostomy



Let’s start from the beginning . . .May 13, 2015 October 19, 2015 [stomalicious](https://stomalicious.wordpress.com)

### SYMPTOMS, DIAGNOSIS + LETTING GO OF DREAMS

I’m not usually one who particularly likes talking about myself or being the centre of attention, but I think it’s important to start this blog with my story. To start from the beginning. I was born in Melbourne in October 1979..... ok well not quite that far back! Fast forward around 30 years. Up until that point I’d had a pretty regular childhood and upbringing. I hadn’t even been in hospital before. [Melbourne, Australia...NOT Florida!].

Then not long after my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday, the first symptoms appeared. I remember clearly the morning after a friend’s wedding in November of 2009, I went to the toilet and noticed blood in the toilet bowl. I didn’t think much of it at first, but it persisted for the next few days, so I thought I’d better go and see my GP. She didn’t seem overly concerned and told me to try taking some inner health plus for a few weeks to see if that helped. Several trips back to the GP and a few months later after a course of antibiotics and some stool samples, and she had referred me on to a specialist. Little did I know at that time what big a role this man would play in the next 4 years of my life!

On the loo ... again!

I was diagnosed pretty quickly after that. After a colonoscopy and banding for suspected hemorrhoids, the symptoms still hadn't abated, and within a few months I was told that I had Crohn's disease. I had never heard of Crohn's before and was really quite ignorant as to what it meant. I didn't feel that bad, apart from the blood in my poo. Even the fact that it was chronic didn't really register with me at first.

[IBD & Self-esteem: September 21, 2015](#)[October 19, 2015](#) [stomalicious](#)

Up until my Crohn's diagnosis just after my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday I was a relatively confident, independent, worldly woman. I was respected at work and was always busy socially. Whilst I never enjoyed being the centre of attention, I could hold my own in a conversation, I was active and adventurous, had a decent career, and a small close knit circle of friends. Having IBD impacted all of that. As my symptoms worsened, many of the things that had been a breeze for me before, became a struggle. Going to work, socializing, even doing the grocery shopping. With the increasing urgent and frequent need to go to the toilet (and often not making it), came increasing insecurities and uncertainties.

[Decision made!: May 14, 2015](#)[October 19, 2015](#) [stomalicious](#)

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of September 2013, I made the decision. I'd had enough. I was sick of feeling sick all the time. I was sick of the pain, the anxiety, the daily struggle. I had grappled over this decision for months. Should I keep fighting? Should I persist? I know others who have put up with far more than me for far longer. Was I being weak? Was I being hasty? I had managed up until this point, but I was miserable. Was it really even a decision? To me, it felt like I had run out of options. Not for lack of trying. The last colonoscopy my gastroenterologist did he couldn't even get a clear picture of my bowel. As soon as he wiped away the blood, within seconds more would appear. There might be new drugs down the track, but who knows when they might be available. It was now at the point, my gastro said, that there were other risks in continuing on as I was.

A week later, I was back in the familiar surroundings of St George Private Hospital ready to have it all removed! It was a huge decision. There was no turning back from this one – a pan proctocolectomy with end ileostomy. It was permanent. I already knew what living with a temporary ostomy was like, but this was something that I would have for the rest of my life, until I was hopefully old (and quite possibly senile!). After 5-6 hours on the operating table, I woke up heavily sedated with Ketamine and Morphine, minus a few pretty major body parts! Basically the whole shebang was taken, except for my small intestine, which is now redirected through a stomal opening on my abdomen where I poo into a nifty little bag, requiring regular emptying and changing.

[Facing our fears](#) [May 19, 2015](#) [May 18, 2015](#) [stomalicious](#)

Today's post is all about World IBD Day, which is today! Held annually on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May each year, World IBD day is led by organizations around the world, spanning 4 continents, in a unified effort to raise awareness and support for IBD.

Over 5 million people worldwide (including 75,000 Australians) live with Crohn's disease and Ulcerative Colitis, known as inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD).

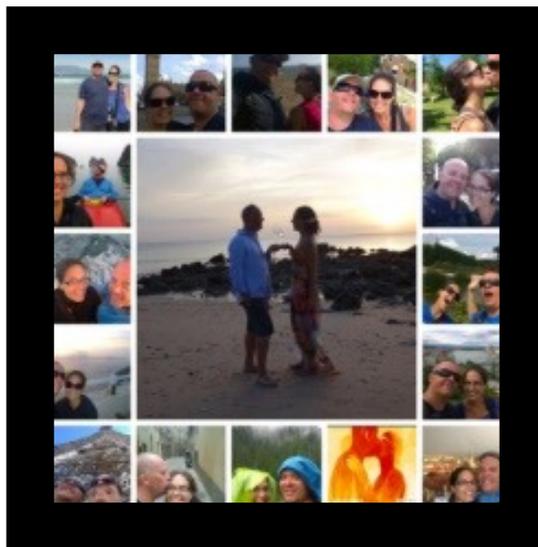
There are events happening across the globe, from community walks in Brazil or participating in the half marathon in Brussels, to information campaigns, lectures and presentations all over the world, selfies with toilet paper in Greece, and purple power in the UK, illuminating landmarks and encouraging everyone to wear the colour purple.

Everyone can get involved in the global video campaign encouraging anyone impacted by IBD (patients, carers, doctors, nurses, family and friends) to share their story via a 30 second video under the unifying theme "United we stand".

I have joined in and here are my efforts!! I can't wait to watch videos submitted from all over the world on the World IBD Day and Crohn's and Colitis Australia websites and You Tube channels.

United we stand in our fight against IBD [HAVE BAG, WILL TRAVEL: May 24, 2015](#) [October 19, 2015](#)

The story continues ...And so, just 6 months after major surgery, Michael and I, and my new ileostomy were off for 10 months of adventure. There was a small part of me that held some trepidation about leaving Australia. I had relied so heavily on my family, close friends and doctors for support, guidance and strength for what seemed like such a long time. However, with Michael by my side, and the knowledge of what we had been through and that we had come this far, I knew we would be okay. Much stronger than that slight apprehension was an overwhelming feeling of joy, exhilaration, incredulity and of course gratitude.



**17 incredible countries!**

As we travelled around the world, I wrote down thoughts about Crohn's and about what it is like traveling with an ostomy. I wanted to do this for others with a stoma, to help with hints and tips on what to do and what not to do, and hopefully prove it can be very doable!

Not long after surgery, we made another big decision .....to travel the world! We spent 10 months traveling through South Africa, Europe and Asia (where my partner of 17 years and I got married)! Along the way, I decided this was my opportunity to share my story and to help bring IBD into the open.

I was inspired by other IBD campaigners, and I hope my story helps, encourages and inspires others too! Traveling and living with a stoma can be daunting, and whilst there certainly may be a few hiccups along the way, having a stoma has really given me my life back, and enabled me to fulfil some lifelong dreams that for a long time I feared may never be possible.

[Introducing "my little guy"](#) [My WOW moment](#) [June 4, 2015](#) [October 19, 2015](#) [stomalicious](#)

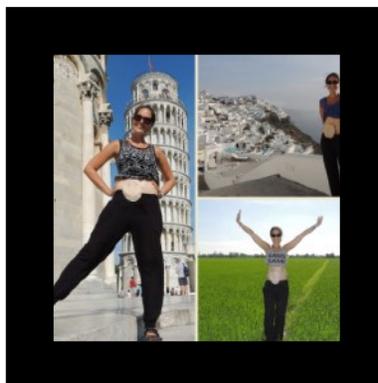
Naming body parts – Do you name yours? A stoma. Just another body part. Like a leg or an arm, your ears or your little finger, it has a purpose and does its job to keep our bodies working. It just looks and functions slightly different to the majority of other peoples. Yet somehow it's far more than just another body part. For some of us it ended years of pain and anguish. For some it saved their lives. I've heard people say their stoma is "a miracle" and "I'm crazy about her."

Others are still unsure and coming to terms with theirs. Of course you wouldn't choose to have a stoma over normal functioning bowels, but for many of us, there was no other option, and it is here to stay. For me, it is now a part of me, and in many ways it is an incredibly fascinating and interesting part of me.

### About Stomalicious

My aim with Stoma-licious is to create a fun, positive and interesting community that is open to all (with or without an inflammatory bowel disease – IBD). A place to learn more about, spread awareness of and embrace our lives with IBD. I want to encourage people to share their stories, emotions and feelings about living with an IBD. No topic is taboo!

I will share personal experiences of my struggle with Crohn's, having surgery, traveling the world and living life with a stoma. I hope to instill some wisdom and have a bit of fun at the same time.



As the name suggests, I also want to promote that having a stoma can be sexy!!! We may not all have the internal parts of our bootys anymore, but we have our stomas, and I'm not ashamed to get my stoma-licious belly out!

So I guess this blog is about a lot of things! It's about me and my story (the good, the bad and the ugly)! My past and ongoing experience living with Crohn's and a stoma. It's about travelling the world, food, friends, family, relationships, sex, pooping my pants, medication and side effects, coping and management techniques, hospitals and surgery, stoma stories, toilet trivia, the list goes on! No subject is off limits!

It's important to acknowledge that everybody is different, and has a different story and experience to share. This blog is based on my own personal experience. I am not a doctor or nurse and what works for me may not necessarily work for you. IBD is incredibly individualistic when it comes to symptoms, diet, medication and treatment. I urge you to please share your experiences and comments too.

Stomalicious is still a bit of a work in progress, but my aspiration is to encourage discussion, inspire others, impart knowledge, reduce stigmas and demystify IBD. There are already a lot of incredible pages doing this, but I hope Stomalicious is unique and a valuable Australian addition to the IBD activists out there. Together we create a united front in growing awareness and a greater acceptance of IBD in the wider community."

[The aforementioned story Gutsy reprinted here is excerpts from Laura/little guy's effervescent exceptional blog on website: <https://stomalicious.wordpress.com> ...check it out for more of their ongoing "adventures" living well/better with an ostomy [or any other life-altering challenges, experiencing all life has to offer worldwide!].



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