THE KEY TO GREAT RECOVERY -
listen up . . . gals!

January 2006
It’s been a privilege to go to Costa Rica twice - once with my friend Mara, to support and observe her surgery experience (we were part of the “Jan2006 Miracle Group” of ladies, that didn’t take our recovery time as serious as we should have & it was a miracle we didn’t both end up with big hematoma’s). The second surgical adventure was in May 2007, for the usual facelift procedure.

With certainty there are some very important key points for an easier & speedier recovery (recovery really differs for each person). Within this article are some SUGGESTIONS to help you enjoy the experience, and then head home looking & feeling wonderful.

1. ROOM BY YOURSELF: This is a must!
On my first trip in Jan.2006, I went with my friend Mara to support her and experience Costa Rica. She bunked with another friend, and I ended up alone - which turned out just fine. After 2 weeks, I decided to get my "eyes" done (upper & lower) since Dr Lev had an opening. Having the privacy really made a huge difference since it allows one to: 1) get proper rest, 2) do whatever you want, 3) have your own schedule, and 4) not have to deal with someone else's quirks, snoring, habits, or needs.

May 2007 The second time 'round -
I went with a life-long pal, and thought we’d try to save some $$$ by rooming together. Even though we had lived half our lives together, it wasn’t the best way. After one week of no sleep, I decided I needed to get my own room & luckily there was one available. Under normal circumstances, I can deal with most anything - but, when just out of surgery & not feeling well, it was impossible to cope ... Dear pal, her snoring defied explanation! As I lay awake until 2 or 3 am, I wondered if our door would be broken down by a cougar on the prowl, looking for a mate and responding to the infernal snores coming from the other bed. No kidding, I ended up at the poolside on the chaise lounge several nights, thinking MAYBE I could sleep there... Uh huh not quite. Do yourself a HUGE favor - always get your own room. Period. End of story.

2. SLEEP FOREVER: almost
The absolute best and easiest thing the do for the first 3 days or so - is SLEEP! One of the ladies from our first trip, (when she got back from surgery) was to simply wake up, down some pills and went back to sleep - we never saw her for days,(and had to wonder if we ever would?) - BUT, when we did, HOLY Mackrel - did she look great- she barely had any bruising issues and ended up looking refreshed and youthful.

3. KEEP UP THE ICE PACKS & COOL CLOTHS: super helpful.
Yes, best to always have the ice packs on for the first day or so, then use cold, wet washcloths or whatever you prefer, since that alleviates a lot of the swelling and bruising and this does determine to some extent, the amount of bruising that will develop. So to be on the safe side, just do it routinely each day.
4. **EAT LIGHTLY / plenty of LIQUIDS & FRUITS:** *light is the key.*
It's really important to consult with Ron on any special menu or food items you need, in advance. He is the most awesome chef, and will cook up all sorts of delectable goodies for dinner, and we thoroughly enjoyed every bite - however, depending on each person, and their dietary needs, you'll have to speak with Ron if you want anything other than the normal, gourmet fare. In addition, it best for your body if you drink lots of fluids and have easily digestible foods. Fruit & veggies are best - makes “things” a whole lot easier overall, and one less thing to worry about, hmmmm?

5. **REST for FIRST WEEK:** *just listen.*
No matter how much you are just “itching” to get out and see the country - either do it prior to your surgery, or wait at least 2 weeks after, and keep it simple! Nope - NO volcano climbing or zip-lining! No matter how bored you may become, it's best to stay put at the recovery facility until Dr. Lev gives his “OKAY” to go. This is really crucial, since your body is still recovering and cleansing itself from all the anesthetics / drugs from surgery. Even if you think you feel fine, it's too much STRESS on the body to be out "galavanting around" and having fun. I have many funny-but-not-so-funny stories, and won't expound on them here, 'cause we were naughty and didn't listen to proper advice. tsk! tsk!

6. **TAKE LOTS of HOT / WARM SHOWERS:** *one thing that works.*
Bored? Can't sleep? Feeling crappy and icky? WELL, the best solution to that is to just hop right into that shower, no matter what time, day or night - and just let that water run through that lovely-matted hair, sore spots, and down your back. The warmer the better, for me - since it's a great way to relax and feel ever so slightly better. I do believe I lived in that shower for the first week - and that saved me from losing it! Water soothes the savage surgery patient!!

7. **NOT A VACATION:** *that's right.*
The biggest mistake I made was thinking I was going to Costa Rica for a vacation. Well, that's what I told everyone before I went, and that's what I believed. Yeah, well - it's NOT. So, do your vacationing before your surgery or 3 weeks after. You don't want to leave Costa Rica looking like you've been down for the count... and haven't quite gotten up yet. That's end of story #2.

Fair warning ladies - - - **TAKE HEED... don't, don't, don't** do the touring until well healed. I have several very funny, but not very smart stories of our forays into Costa Rica way too soon, before recovered sufficiently, and it definitely caused delays in healing and made a huge difference in how long it took to get back to normal life, once home. Just don't do any touring - period, until given the okay by Dr. Lev.

8. **LISTEN TO THE DOC:** **TAKE THE DRUGS!**
Yes, I'm telling you what to do, out of my own experiences, since I need to learn to listen to my own advice. On my first surgical trip, I avoided taking any of the medications prescribed, since I only had my eyes done, and didn't think I needed anything. However, it would have made relaxing much easier, and the recovery more pleasant had I just taken the meds... really, every little bit helps. Second time around,
I made sure I downed every single pill, since they are all meant to help comfort, inflammation, sleep, and potential infection. Let me tell you, it made a huge difference in my ability to just let go and allow my body to heal in its own time.

9. **GO WITH the Positive & AVOID anything negative:** *be protective of yourself*

This is an emotional time for us, dealing with surgery / recovery and all the implications. So, it’s imperative you only allow the positive into your life. If you find there is someone in the group who is too negative, critical, aggressive, and they’re causing stress - separate from it; avoid it and keep yourself emotionally safe, to ensure your healing goes perfectly.

10. **COME PREPARED:** *items needed*

Whatever things make you feel comfy and warm - simulate your home environment, which helps in staying relaxed and de-stressed. First time ‘round, I forgot to bring a lot of those comfy, familiar things; second trip I made sure to have all the necessities / so made it like second home … I could retreat to my little sanctuary, as needed.

11. **MUST STAY:** *2 week minimum, 3 is best*

If I had it all to do over again, I’d stay for a full month. There is nothing more stressful after surgery than realizing things aren’t fully healed, or the bruising isn’t going away so easily. Not something you want to rush, especially if you have to get back to work and wonder how you’ll avoid looking like Rocky Balboa “knocked for a loop” when getting on the plane home!! Been there, done that - not a good way to go.

**YOU ABSOLUTELY MUST** give the time needed - so don’t cut it short. That really means about 3 weeks is ideal, 2 weeks is typical, but no one ever looks normal at that point. However, my sister and I had very minimal bruising and were quite astounded with our results after only 2 weeks. Still, we needed our “glamour shades” and clothing articles to cover up the front & back neck area. In desperation, I even stuck on my goofy Gilligan Island’s cap on all the way home. Ha, that looked priceless, but at that point, who cared?

12. **READ / MUSIC / LISTEN - be comfy**

Grab that pillow, make a nice depression for your neck and head, get comfy, have all your things around you… then just READ. Or, if you prefer, sit-lay there with your headphones and listen to books on tape or your favorite music. But please, NO Boombox - Oh, that is another story for sure, but just know that not everyone wants to hear salsa music blasting away, while they are attempting to recover. *Hint…. hint… yeah.*

13. **AVOID LAUGHING - ha ha!**

If you were with me and my group, that would be impossible…. Well, it is damn-near impossible when you look in the mirror, or when in the company of all the other "prize-fighter-surgery-babes" with assorted bruises and colors. Probably the hardest thing for me was to stop laughing - since I roomed with my younger sister the second time round, and that was a big NO-NO - because when we are together, all we do is laugh; I laugh at her, she at me, we make
our comments & observations, and laugh some more. Despite all of the levity YES, LEV-ity - we still came out looking fantastic - so, we can only attribute this to the superior surgical skills of our Dr LEV - whom we all LOVE... LOVE THE LEV!

REALITY IS, Costa Rica, Dr Lev and Villa Plenitud is the BEST POSSIBLE place for your surgery, recovery & care. Having looked at all options, seen friends go through all sorts of discomfort and issues state-side - I can’t say enough great things about my experience with surgery in Dr Lev’s care. Too bad we all can’t have this exceptional treatment for any surgery we undergo.

HERE IS THE “Afterwards” SCENARIO:
After your surgery you come back to your room. As usual it’s spotless and clean. You “plop” into bed, whether you remember or not, and off you go to slumber-land for awhile. If you decide to be more awake, then you can choose to eat in your room or go to the dining area. Each patient is different, so whatever works for you, and whichever is most comfortable, that’s what you choose for yourself.

This is YOUR RECOVERY TIME, and you need to pay attention to HOW you are feeling; what is most comfortable; what is stressing you; and do what is Best for you at this time. That is the key for a great recovery & state of mind is crucial in any healing process, whether physical or mental.

It’s best to be aware of your emotional well-being; go with all suggestions to recover fully. Realize we each differ when it comes to bruising & levels of pain. For me, I had minimal pain and very little bruising, which astounded me, since I bruise so easily elsewhere on my body. Somehow, my face was immune, and that was great - however, because of that, I was under the notion that all was healed, and so did way too much activity, was too soon.

So, Ladies & Gents – long story short, if you decide to take the plunge and go to Costa Rica for your session with Dr Lev, do remember these helpful suggestions - it can make a world of difference in how you heal, feel and recover your new You!..” And believe it or not, these were some of the most memorable and adventuresome times, in my life’s tapestry... which I'll always treasure, even having met some wonderful ladies now consider dear friends.

Be Happy & Be well!

Cheerio -0

Barb

QUESTIONS?
Please direct questions to my email: casoalbuono2@yahoo.com
and I'll be happy to respond