5 Positive Things About Having MS

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Positive Aspects of MS

One of the things I hate about having a visible disability is seeing the look of well-meaning pity on people’s faces. The other day someone patted my arm encouragingly as I was struggling along, “poor you” radiating from her eyes in waves of sympathy.

It gets on my nerves because I don’t feel “poor” at all. I have so many positives in my life, and this got me thinking about the positive things about having MS. Obviously I would prefer not to have a chronic, disabling illness, but in some ways it has enriched and improved my life. You must think I’m crazy for thinking this, but let me explain.

1. Inner Strength

Someone once said, “That which doesn’t kill you makes you stronger,” or words to that effect. This is certainly true of MS. When I was diagnosed I didn’t know anything about the condition and spent many a dark moment reading horror stories online about what could happen further down the line.

I lived in fear of relapse and progression but now, eight years later, I realize it hasn’t killed me and although I live with disability, I feel emotionally armour-plated. Little things don’t phase me anymore and I have an inner confidence that has helped me realize my rights as a disabled person and enabled me to write about my experiences and support other people.

2. Sympathy and Empathy

Sometimes I have less sympathy for people when they moan about their problems, thinking to myself, “At least you can walk!” Most of the time though I feel empathy for others and have learned that people live with all sorts of issues, sometimes invisible, and they have to carry on. People think we’re all brave, but what choice do we have? MS has made me much more tolerant, patient and compassionate and I believe I’m a better person because of it.

3. Happiness - What’s Important in Life?

I count my blessings more now than I ever did before diagnosis. I have a wonderfully supportive family; two beautiful, healthy, happy children; a lovely home in a safe, affluent neighbourhood; just about enough money to live on; and a wonderful, loving husband. I don’t take any of these things for granted as I know now that everything is temporary and it could all change.

I appreciate simple things like the sun on my face, clean bed sheets and a good book! I used to be on the move all the time, thinking about my career or striving to compete with other people, but now I’m content with what I have and that’s a nice feeling.

Next page: two more positive aspects of MS.

4. Community

I am actively involved with the MS community both online, through social media, and in person through local groups of MSers. I have met some inspirational people who have taught me so much. I met one lady with symptoms similar to mine, who transformed the way I viewed my ability to work after I was made redundant a few years ago. She uses a scooter to get around at work and has a hoist fitted to her car to get it in and out – it had never occurred to me that I could do the same till I talked to her.

Now I have a fantastic employer who understands my rights and does everything they can to make working with MS easier for me. Without meeting her I wouldn’t have had the confidence to even get a scooter, and would have been rotting at home watching daytime TV!

I’ve “met” wonderfully supportive people online, too, and through writing and sharing my blog on Twitter fantastic opportunities have opened up for me. For example, I took part in the launch of a new app in the UK called Symtrac, and have sat on an advisory board about MS brain health for a global pharmaceutical company. I have also written articles for numerous publications, which not only supplements my income, but has also done wonders for my confidence! Who knew I could write? Without MS giving me a voice I would never have known I could make something of it.

I’m also involved in running a closed Facebook group called MSpals, which has members from all over the world who support and help each other. I’m so proud of this as we started it from scratch a few months ago and already have 350 members. Come and join us!

5. You Find out Who Your Friends Are

I have shed a few friends along the way, but most of them have stayed with me and although it’s harder to get out and about as much as I used to I still have fun nights at mine, facilitated my a glass of wine or three!

So, although I would much rather be able bodied, MS has given me a focus and perspective I never had before. I understand myself and other people so much better, have happiness and fulfilment and most importantly have managed to maintain a sense of humour!

As soon as I accepted and embraced MS as a part of me, the happier I became.