Standing Up For Yourself

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Dealing with the Inconsiderate People in Your Life

Let’s face it, the world contains a lot of bullies and people who take others for granted. We all have to deal with them from time to time, and they can make life tough.

Life is even tougher when you have a chronic illness, and having inconsiderate people in your life makes things all the more stressful.

Once you are diagnosed with multiple sclerosis you are faced with whole teams of people who all have an opinion about what you need to do. Some of these people are highly qualified medical professionals, others are your friends and family, and often times they are passing strangers.

Most of the time the people around you have something positive to contribute to your life. Other times they cross the line a little bit – and sometimes they cross the line a lot.

So what do you do? How do you put your proverbial foot down and get your point across while managing to move on and still choke out a great day?

Re-evaluating Relationships

First of all, you need to be proactive. This means doing the interpersonal equivalent to giving your home a solid spring cleaning, which I really need to do. (Seriously, my house is a mess right now and none of you are invited to see it.)

The important thing is to focus on sorting out all of the people who have a history of being insensitive to you or have a habit of ignoring your needs.

Sorting out the shifty ones is easy when you don’t rely on them for assistance or support. You can just say, ‘goodbye’ and never say, ‘hello’ again.

However, if you have medical professionals or family that are crossing the line then you have to set some very clear boundaries.

Setting Boundaries

This can be difficult, especially if boundaries are new to you. However, you will find boundaries can become your most trusted ally.

Boundaries are not always easy to form and successfully express to someone in the moment. If you are like me,

you will find yourself hurt and upset and then stressing over the situation long after the moment has passed.

This is when I try to focus on what it is that I am really feeling. I try to gain some perspective and rationalize what happened as well as I can. I try to understand where the other person was coming from and then I allow myself to have equal rights in the space and time of the situation.

It is important to give yourself equal rights and value in every situation. It can be hard, especially with MS, but it is crucial to your happiness. It is very easy to devalue yourself, or allow others to devalue you, when MS is robbing you of your independence and strength.

You must remain focussed on who you are and what you are worth. Boundaries are basically your set rules or guidelines for your expectations of others. I know this can come across as very high and mighty, it is not meant in that tone. Truth is, everyone deserves healthy boundaries and space in their interpersonal relationships.

Once you truly appreciate the value of that space for others, you can see the value of the space that you deserve in return.

Next page: be prepared, be vocal, and find good people.

Be Prepared and Be Vocal

Once you have decided on a boundary, be ready for it to be breached in the future and to use your voice when it happens. If someone is laughing about how slow you walk, feel free to say, "It is not OK to laugh about how I walk." You are giving your feelings a voice and you are telling the person that they have crossed the line.

Reasonable people who care about you WILL hear you when you express your boundaries. This is something that you must understand. If you find yourself with a person who continually ignores your expressed boundaries, then you need to think seriously about whether or not you want to interact with this person anymore.

Find Good People

Strengthen your ties to the people in your life that make your world a better place. Make sure that you show them how much you appreciate them and how they affect your life. Good people are a solid asset to your happiness.

If you find yourself looking around and thinking, "I have a lot of selfish people in my life," then you need to focus on finding more people who are the opposite. Care for your good relationships, they are worth more than gold to you now and for as long as they can remain in your life. Focussing on finding people who make life better, smoother, happier in all arenas will become a cumulative force.

If you do not feel that your medical team is positive to deal with then, no matter what they rank in the polls of public opinion, they aren’t good for you and it is time to find and build a better team. You may need to travel a little further to get to them, but they will make your life all the better for it.

Be Vocal About Good Things, Too!

Always remember to tell people that they are doing great when they are. If you have a great pharmacy that makes ordering up your meds an easy process, tell them! They need to know. Many medical professionals get tired and worn down. The good things they do can get thrown to the wayside if they don’t feel that it is appreciated.

You are doing yourself and everyone else they work with a favor by noticing their good deeds. We need those actions to be rewarded as much as possible! We need organizations and professionals to know what it is that they are doing that works. They will be more incentivized towards making those gestures not only a habit, but also a policy. Good policy is good news for everyone.

Conclusion

Standing up for yourself is about noticing your surroundings. It is about noticing the people in your life. Standing up for yourself is about building up the positives and leaving less room for the negatives. If your life is full of positive people, you will have little time and energy to spend on those who are negative.

You are not capable of changing other peoples behaviors. Their actions will always be their choice. You are capable of showing others how their behaviors affect you. You have a voice that must be heard.

We are all in this together. The things that you do and the things that you say have immense value. Do not underestimate the importance of your experiences within this world that we all live. Every interaction that you have with someone else is another opportunity designed to make its own ripple. Your words may sound small when you say them, but the mark you make can run deep.

Your place in this world is your choice. Remember to look in the mirror and take stock of your value. Do not forget it. Carry it with you as you move through your days and you will live a beautiful life with beautiful people.