Don’t Forget to Relax

by LIBBY SELINSKY

Remembering to Relax Despite MS

Even before I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis I remember how hard it was to keep up with everything and still find moments of calm joy. Now, post diagnosis, finding the time and the calm is even more difficult.

I feel like the world expects so much of us now. Gone is the time where life was based upon sustenance and survival. These days we are expected to be, to do, so much more. If we are not financially stable, level headed, deep thinking, highly athletic, nutritionally balanced, well dressed, happy, child raising people with loads of free time, a nice house and car and money in the bank for exciting vacations, then society will find a way to snub us and mark us as failures.

Our society is not structured for people to have time to breathe, let alone have room for a disease that sneaks in and steals energy and abilities. So I ask you, how do we relax?

I am still struggling with my time management. I still have days, like yesterday and today, where I deeply feel like I am not enough now, nor will I ever be.

And while I realize this is beginning to sound very much like I am looking for your pity, I do feel it is important to say, "This is my struggle and I know that I am not alone in facing it every day."
We still push forward though, don’t we?

Waking up every morning, we face the same sunlight and realize that the world does not stop spinning. We will not have a day where time stops passing; every moment is precious and moving, whether we contribute to it or not.

One Thing at a Time

Last Friday should have been simple, but in life things go wrong. My son was having a campout in our backyard for his 13th birthday party that evening.

That situation looks simple on the surface, and it should have been. However, I decided to trim one of our cat's nails that morning and he bit me.

The bite was really deep, so I had to go to urgent care and get a tetanus shot and an antibiotic. Tetanus shots give me the creeps because the last MS relapse I had came two weeks after the last time I was given this particular vaccine. I am not, by any means, an anti-vaxer, nor do I really believe that there is a causation between the two events. The shot just gives me the creeps, is all, and I had that on my mind for the rest of the day.

Either way, hours of our time were now wasted at yet another doctor’s appointment and not spent on doing all of the things that needed to be done in order to be ready for the party.

After urgent care, my son and I rallied. We decided to just knock some of the pre-part extra errands and chores off of our to do list and go out for a nice lunch. Lunch was wonderful. The time was peaceful and I was able to sit for a few minutes and take stock of the man that my son is becoming.

After we finished eating, we returned home and readied our house for the party. My son is a great helper and hard worker, he really took the reigns and made everything doable.

Dinner time came and went, the boys enjoyed a fun evening of chasing each other around our yard with their nerf guns. The noises of their battle yells were tied together with the sounds of crickets and cicadas in the warm air. I like the peace that comes with a summer night.

Next page: stop trying to be perfect and find peace in the little things.

Stop Trying to be Perfect

It is important to remember that our day is not going to be predictable. We are not going to be able to plan away all of the surprises, whether they are good or bad.

We have to cut ourselves some slack and tell ourselves that we are good enough. Our home may not be as clean, the meals we serve might not look like something off of Pinterest, but we are wonderful, nonetheless!

Everyone is going to fall short in one direction or the other, and if we allow ourselves to start chasing that white whale then we are bound to get lost on our paths and fail.

We do not have space in our lives to conform to society's whims anymore. That is a blessing to us all. Our bodies are constantly reminding us not today, not enough, not now. It is our job to listen to our bodies and make our world into a place that we find comfort in.

Find Peace in the Little Things

I said earlier that the world will not stop turning for you. But it will keep asking for more for as long as you let it.

It is your job to find peace in the little gifts that are hidden around you every day. I found mine in the cup of coffee I drank while I was writing today. On Friday, I relaxed during my lunch with my son. That evening, I found it when I was painting my hallway, listening to the boys yell and play.

The world gives us opportunities to revel in its beauty. It is our job to make note of it all and take the timeout to enjoy it during the moment that we see it.

A Full Day is a Happy Day, Mostly

It is important to see that you are still relevant. Your life still matters. You are still a part of something very precious as a parent with MS.

My anger with being diagnosed was directly connected to my fear of failure and annihilation of the future of my role as a mother. I was so wrong. My role has deepened and grown and the days have ticked by. I am great at what I do, with all of my imperfections. We all are.

We need to pull our heads out of our to-do lists and look around at everything that we are still accomplishing everyday.

Our children grow up so quickly, and they are not keeping score of what we do. My son does not remember what I was like before I got sick and that used to make me sad. I have come to realize though, I am better today than I was then; I find respite in that.

What is it all About Anyways?

Seriously, what is it all about? If you don’t take the time to stop and smell the roses then the world will keep spinning on its axis and your life will pass right on by.

There is no magical schedule or way to ensure that you are going to get the time that you need to relax — being a parent teaches you that real quick! Our best bet is to live in the moment, pay attention to our days as they are happening and find joy in the moments while we are living them.