How to Make the Most Out of Everything While Traveling With MS

by LIBBY SELINSKY

Traveling With MS

I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2007. That period was very dark for me. I remember believing that my life would be redefined within the parameters of my new affliction. One of the things that I thought I would not be able to do was travel.

We all know that traveling can be a stressful experience under even the best circumstances. Imagining travel when you have a health condition can feel overwhelming and intimidating.

However, with a little planning, you can make the most out of your trip – no matter where you go.

Know Your Limitations

While thinking about what you want to do and finding ways to do them there is something you need to understand – know your limitations! This is something that I have needed to learn these past ten years is the fact that being different does not mean being less deserving or less capable.

I have a husband and a teenage son. There have been many activities that they have enjoyed over the years that I have not been able to participate in.

It is impossible for me to tell you that those times were not hard, but they have taught my family and me, that when they are off doing something that they like, I am free to do something that suits me better and that is completely okay.

Embrace What You Can Do

Most of the time activities can be modified to fit all of your needs.

This past May we took a trip to the Azores. The Azores are an archipelago in the Atlantic Ocean. It is a beautiful, green tourist destination – which means lots of walking, hiking, boating, and swimming.

I know this doesn't sound very MS friendly, but it is doable. Surprisingly, the island was incredibly easy for me to traverse.

One day we went whale watching, and there was a larger vessel that had a restroom on it since frequency is one of my main struggles from MS. It turns out that my family was grateful for the larger boat, were able to travel further out into the ocean and saw several blue whales and dolphins!

Despite MS, You Can Do It

The Azores still maintains all of its rustic and isolated beauty, and the citizens have built trails, ramps, and staircases to make traversing trail paths easier.

At first, I was terrified that the trail would be too long, too arduous, or too exhausting for me, but I made up my mind to go there. I would not let my MS stop me from enjoying the hidden delights of this world. Fortunately, the trail was easier than I had presumed it would be.

When I made it to the outlook, I began to cry. I was just so overwhelmed with gratitude. While standing at there and looking at the world around me, I was filled with an all-encompassing realization that I was enough. My needs are enough. My abilities are enough. My desires are enough.

I thought long and hard about all of those times that I was not able to hike a trail with my husband and son and those times made me feel small and insignificant. I never thought I would be the one bringing my family to a place that was breathtaking and extraordinary because I always thought that I would forever be the one at the back of the pack and left behind in the shadows.

At that moment I realized that I was the reason why my family was standing at this place of majestical wonder. I had found a special place in the world, one that suited my needs and captivated my family's imagination.

You Are Enough

I have a different body than I would like, but that does not mean that I am less because I know I am enough.

I believe that travel feeds the soul in many ways and this trip shook my world in a way that I had never imagined.

I could continue to write to you about all of the practical ways that you can adjust your vacation to fit your needs, but only you can know what it is that you need and I am sure that you are better versed than I am at finding ways to do so.

Instead, I want to focus on that undefined part of us that tends to lay forgotten in the shadows. The one which keeps track of all the ways we image ourselves holding our loved ones back in the world.

A feeling of being a burden to the world has stuck with me for quite some time. It is the dagger that shot through my heart in mid-February of 2007 and has been secretly bleeding ever since. That is until the moment that I reached the trailhead on Saô Miguel Island.

At that moment, I saw myself through my family's eyes and in a way that I never allowed myself to absorb before.

I realized that while it is my obligation to them to maintain my health as well as possible; MS it is not a failure that I need to carry. I am not less because this disease happens to be a part of my life.

I realized that my family does not see my disease as something that I have afflicted them with. It is just a fact of our family life.

We All Have to Live With MS

While each of us would prefer it not exist in our lives, I know that I am not holding them back from joy, I am not holding them back from beauty, and I am not holding them back from a full and magical life.

I believe that it is easy to say that a disease prevents us from traveling. I just do not believe that it is true. There are people of all shapes, sizes, and abilities who live all over the world. Why would MS prevent any of us from seeing everything that this world has to give?