Can You Live a Normal Life With MS?

by ERICA WILSON

Life With MS: Finding Your New Normal

I recently read an article that aptly described life with multiple sclerosis (MS) as trudging through mud – a deep, murky mud in your brain, around your hands, legs, and feet. This is by far the best description I have encountered.

I am unemployed now, having tried and tried to trudge daily through the muck and mire that is MS. I couldn't quite explain it to my well-meaning supervisor, though she tried hard to understand.

Mondays were fine, as long as I didn't overdo it over the weekend. Tuesdays I started to feel the impact of an already long workweek. Wednesdays felt like I had put in at least 40 hours already. By the end of the week, the mud was nearly unmanageable. I would rest as much as possible over the weekend, but the longer I tried to work, life overpowered the short periods of rest.

Adjusting to A New Normal With MS

When it became clear that I would be unable to work a 40 hour week, I had a tough decision to make. My supervisor tried to accommodate my needs by allowing me to work part-time for a month (with a note from my doctor), but even that was difficult after about a week and a half.

My love of writing and my newfound spare time allowed me to pursue a career as a freelance writer. I am now in the process of applying for disability, but in the meantime, I search for writing opportunities for income as I wait.

If you find yourself in a similar situation, find your passion and pursue it. This is a great way to adjust to your new normal.

More Ways to Adjust to Your New Life With MS

Finding people who share not only your MS journey, but also your passion, is an excellent way to adjust to life with MS.

My doctor's office/hospital has a resource center that offers MS yoga, tai chi, aqua exercise classes, and even a choir! Check your local MS chapter or speak with your neurologist to find out if the same or similar offerings are available near you.

I receive a monthly newsletter with a reminder of upcoming events and allows me to register for anything I want.

Find an Enjoyable Exercise

Exercise is a terrific way to adjust to your new normal. I purchased a yoga mat and will sometimes find a yoga

video on YouTube.

Also, there are several exercise apps you can download to your phone. They are pretty easy and fun. You can also receive notifications when it's time to exercise!

I have found that starting off slowly is the key. Many times, while in the moment, I don't feel the exertion or the effect it is having on my body. Starting slowly keeps regrets and the possibility of relapse low.

Always check with your physician before starting any new exercise regime.

Attitude Is Everything

Remaining positive in the midst of adversity is sometimes very difficult. I always say life is hard enough on its own, why add fuel to the fire with negative thoughts and actions? I wouldn't go so far to call myself Pollyanna, but I do try to find the good in most things.

One of the good things about my MS diagnosis is that, as I mentioned before, the opportunity to pursue my writing career.

Another great thing that helps me through my muddy MS life is that I get to spend all day with my baby grandson. Five months is the best age because I don't have to chase him since he is not mobile yet!

Look for as many positive things in your life. With or without MS, it makes the journey a little easier.

Feed Your Body With the Nutrients It Needs

Eating right plays a huge role in how we feel day-to-day. If you have to change the way you eat, it makes it a little more difficult to make better choices, but it is possible.

I stay away from fad dieting or diets that claim to heal. I research and check with my doctor if I have any questions about trying something out of the ordinary.

For me, protein in the form of eggs and lots of dark green, leafy vegetables make up my menu. Salmon and tuna fish are also part of my shopping list. I love fruit of every kind, so when I am not eating them, I am drinking them in a yummy smoothie.

The Bottom Line...

Trying different foods, activities, meeting new people are all things you should try to make your new life with MS easier to live. Whether you are recently diagnosed or have been on the journey for years, make a fresh start. Renew your love for life. Embrace your change.