

multiple sclerosis

written by Melissa McDaniel

One day while I was at work, my hand started to go numb. I thought nothing of it until the following morning when I woke and found that the numbness had spread up my entire arm. Figuring that I had injured myself while transferring a patient, I reported to my head nurse. I was required to see the worker's compensation physician who diagnosed carpal tunnel syndrome and sent me back to work. Day by day my condition deteriorated. Numbness spread to my chest, neck, face, and my legs and soon it was obvious that the previous diagnosis was incorrect. I was placed on light duty charged with answering the telephone. I began to experience uncontrollable movements of my fingers, along with intense neck pain. I began to stumble and fall and realized that my ability to walk was beginning to decline.

I had made three trips to the ER, to no avail and I was very weak and fatigued at this point. Fear and depression began to set in as I lost the ability to feed myself properly. Suddenly I required assistance with everyday tasks - bathing, personal hygiene and even getting dressed. Somehow I spent thirty days in bed, only being woken to eat or bathe. I could not think about the everyday things that normally consume ones life - my children, my work, my home. Finally, after a series of blood tests and MRIs, my doctor delivered the results over the phone. "Ms. Melissa, you have multiple sclerosis".

Although this news was devastating, it brought so much relief to all my unanswered questions. I was relieved, angry, and in denial all at once. The tests revealed that my brain was swollen and had several lesions: the largest measuring approximately 0.6 cm. A steroid treatment was initiated immediately to bring the swelling down. Soon after, I noticed a major improvement although I was still weak, numb and in pain.

"Ms. Melissa, you have multiple sclerosis".

I began physical therapy three times a week. I knew I had to push myself or my life was going to be hell. Even though my body was not functioning properly and I still needed assistance, I knew I was getting stronger every day. After two weeks of therapy I spoke with my doctor, telling him I wanted to continue on my own. He did not think this was the best idea, but I did it anyway. I would practice reaching and picking up objects, often dropping them and becoming very frustrated. I was determined, however, so I persevered.

Exercising was the most important part of my therapy. I would do what ever I could, even if it was just stretching one day or lifting two pound weights while sitting. I gradually increased the resistance in my strength training and the distance in my daily walks. I was not going to let multiple sclerosis control me: I decided that I was going to control the multiple sclerosis.



There are days still when I will feel totally exhausted and my body will ache, or my vision will be blurred and I will have slight tremors in my arms and hands. I know that if I stop going for just one day I will start to go downhill, so I push myself to keep going. I know the rewards are enormous. I had lost it all and knew what it was like to be unable to pick up my child, to take a shower or clean my house - and I refuse to ever let it happen again! The big surprise with MS is that you never know when it will strike. I can honestly say that I am prepared for an episode because I am stronger and I know what needs to be done. I know that it is critical to exercise and eating properly is equally important. On March 6th it will have been two years since this journey began and today I can walk, run, feed myself, bath, and pick up my daughter once again! I love life, I love my family, and I love to help others. I know that in order to live life to the fullest, I must always continue to strengthen my body as well as my mind. I hope that everybody who reads this will strive to do the same, because as I have discovered, you never know what could happen.

Do you know someone living with Multiple Sclerosis?

Help make people aware of this disease.

email info@tytnessfanatik.com with your story

To find out more about MS
visit: <http://www.msociety.ca>

HELP FIND A CURE