

A Journey to My True Self Choosing Weight Loss as a Person Living With MS



The power of autonomy to make our own life choices and write the script for how we would like our lives to play out is sacred. I have always held a vision of how I would grow through life and create a future of my choosing. So, getting the results from my neurologist at 20 years old with an official diagnosis of MS was devastating.

The control I thought I had over my life was shattered. I had also lived with severe anxiety and depression throughout my life, which went hand in hand with being overweight. I don't recall memories of my childhood before being aware of my weight; I noticed from a young age the devastatingly obvious differences between the weight of my peers versus my own. The struggle with my weight was a constant in my life until I started college, when I used unhealthy amounts of exercise as a coping mechanism for homesickness. The number on the scale changed, but nothing else did. I still managed daily life with depression, anxiety, and what I now understand to be symptoms of MS.

Once the homesickness resolved, the excessive exercise stopped, and the weight returned. I never did feel truly comfortable with myself or my body at any weight and now this – multiple sclerosis. Another way for my body to fail me.

I knew the effects of MS personally [from watching my father struggle with it](#) for years before my diagnosis. I mourned the future I thought MS had taken from me and decided to take action to write a new story. I found the best doctors I could and aggressively started the

fight against my MS. I fought so MS would not take the same things from me that it took from my dad. But what was missing? Why was I still feeling powerless in my own body?

The weight.

The burden of that gnawing self-doubt and poor self-esteem. I knew my ever-changing weight was a huge factor in contributing to my overall health, including my MS. It took 13 years after diagnosis, a marriage and three children to finally bring me to a place where I decided my weight would not control my destiny. I researched weight loss surgery, particularly for individuals with MS. I found nothing. So I decided to use my own resources. I went to mental health counselors, holistic nutritionists, multiple surgeons and neurologists to gather as much reliable information as I could about weight loss surgery and MS.

After much deliberation, I got the green light. My whole care team supported me and the positive changes the surgery could have on my life. I knew that I had a good handle on the mental reasons behind my weight (food addiction, trauma, loss, etc.), and I was ready to let go of that. I was ready to love myself. Ready to really take hold of my health and fight MS with all my strength. My body deserved to rest from carrying the weight. My family deserved to see me well and happy. I deserved to feel confident and present in my own body.

I know the topic of chronic illness and weight loss surgery are both uncomfortable for some people, but we are the best advocates for our own bodies and our well-being. We should be empowered to seek answers and make choices that help us to stand up and fight MS. Having weight loss surgery just 5 months ago has changed my life. It may be cliché to say that this life change was not about the numbers on the scale, but more about attaining the vision I saw of myself, but it's true. The new life I pictured where MS and my struggles with weight, anxiety and depression were all parts of my past – parts of lessons I have learned and steppingstones I have used to reach my goals. I have more energy and confidence than ever before, and I can say that MS will not win.

Everyone has their own unique journey with MS, and The National MS Society blog strives to amplify the diverse perspectives of people in the MS movement. While the content of this blog may be sensitive to some, the author is sharing her personal, authentic journey with MS.