

# Always Looking Ahead



**There was a moment in my life when I just paused. I paused because of the uncertainty that was hidden right before my very own eyes. That uncertainty was delivered in four very short words in March of 2008, “You have multiple sclerosis.”**

Like many of us who have had to hear that same phrase, we have no idea what MS looks like from the outside because for some individuals, you will never even know... but we know what havoc it's wrecking on the inside. At just 18 years old, I had to “power up” and accept the fact that I was now going to live with a disease I knew nothing to little about, except for what the dreaded search engine was telling me: no cure, disability, wheelchair bound and a lot of big medical terms.

Oh yeah, those are fun, aren't they?

As a young person living with MS, the thoughts of your future are running wild in your head. I was preparing to graduate high school, I was looking at my college choices, there was so much in front of me that I was looking forward to and not knowing the course of my MS, I was a bit lost. Having this type of diagnosis at a young age is scary, and I would have loved to connect with others in the same boat as me, but unfortunately, it felt as though I was all alone.

That is why about a year after my diagnosis, I decided I needed to do something more. I needed to shine the light on the fact that yes, I am an individual living with MS, but I refuse to let it shape the rest of my life and hold me back from doing the things I love to do.

It started out with a simple article in my local newspaper to help promote and bring awareness to the Walk MS event. Just a few pieces of information about my diagnosis and what I was hoping to accomplish by participating in an MS event, led to so much support and encouragement. People would say things like, "Oh my goodness, I had no idea!" or "I'm so sorry, what can I do?" But the one thing that stood out most for me was an individual who I went to high school with. She reached out and said she saw the article about me, and she too was diagnosed at a young age.



There it was. There was that fire within to keep pushing and raising as much awareness as I possibly could because I know what that feeling is to have no one around you to talk to. So I kept on pushing, and I kept on getting my voice out in news articles. I started to share my story on my social networks, and I just continued to join in on any possible event I could because I want a cure!

My advice to any young individual diagnosed with MS; don't be afraid. Things are going to seem scary for a little while, but you need to remember: this doesn't mean life stops, it means you keep going and you keep finding that fire within to keep pushing and moving along. There is so much in life to enjoy and experience, so don't let MS stand in your way. Break through that barrier and do what you love with the people who love you and support you!