

Be Free



Hey multiple sclerosis family,

My name is Liz Walters, and I'm a little new to this tribe. But honestly, I'm changed for the better because of it. I'm a senior in college at a big southern state school, my major is psychology, I love to paint, and of course I have relapsing remitting multiple sclerosis. I grew up in South Carolina, low-country sailing and spending every moment I could on the boat or in the water.

Being only 21, I know I'm relatively young to be diagnosed, but my doctors think I've been fighting MS symptoms since I was 16 years old based on my retina problems history.

Other than that small detail, I'm a very normal college girl who just lives with a few more "if" clauses. When I say "if" clauses I mean:

- Wow, I'm so excited to study abroad in May, but what if I have a massive episode and have to go home or I'm relatively helpless alone on the streets of Italy?
- Wow I really like this guy but what if his ideal girl isn't exactly the full package when it comes to health (and before you say that's ridiculous, I urge you to imagine a 20 something male pushing a wheelchair around a frat party).
- I want this job so badly, but their health insurance is terrible, and if I'm not off my parents by the time I'm 26, I'll probably end up dead in a ditch.

Of course, these are all dramatized for effect, and if you're my parents, I can imagine the eye-rolls you're giving me. And it's true there will be more days to go to Italy if the worst does occur, and I'm worthy of being loved by someone (baggage and all), and who knows

what health care will look like in 5 years.

But all of these “if” clauses lead to a grandeur aspect of my MS, considering I live very little to no daily symptoms (and hopefully will remain that way for a very long time). That element that is introduced is the idea that one **plans** for these things. You see, my dear friends, I am what we call **NOT** a planner. My mother is a planner, and I am “last minute Liz.”

I’m the friend that decides the moment of, and all my life these impromptu adventures have brought me so much joy and so many memories. I am among the amazing single 21-year-old girls that have the blessing of being, for lack of a better term, free.

I think like everything in life, God plans it out so perfectly that we can’t ever truly understand the intricate details of what is at play. Perhaps I have MS because my gypsy nature allows me to let go of these worries that would occupy others’ thoughts pervasively. Perhaps it is so I’ll maybe plan ahead a little more before I end up somewhere without my medicine, and in turn start my papers sooner than the day before.

Or maybe it is so I can write this post, for you, for everyone who knows what it feels like to be young and alive without a care in the world, until you are forced to have a care. Here is what I have learned: never change. MS should never prevent you from living how you want, but in the case that it does someday you’ll need to remember the times you said “yes” to an adventure without a second thought, and it’ll all have been worthwhile.

Editor’s note: If you are newly diagnosed with MS, [learn more here](#). Also refer to the Society’s 31-page starter guide, [Knowledge is Power](#), which will give you an overview of everything you need to know, right now.