

Damaged Goods



The approaching holidays can be a bright and wonderful time of the year. It can also lead to some tough times for people living with MS. While friends and family gather to bask in the warmth of the season, we can sometimes feel “less-than.”

No one would want a gift from the damaged and discounted goods table; why, goes the faulty logic, would someone want us?

For people in supportive and loving relationships, this may seem like an unfounded worry. But even I hear whispers of the little voice of doubt creep into my head in the dark hours when I am alone with my thoughts.

And, let's face it, these fears are not unfounded.

Dating and relationship-building is tough work in a culture of perfection. We need to whiten our teeth, wear expensive clothes and pretty shoes if we're going to attract a potential mate. How are we going to find and then pursue Mr. or Miss Right if we have optic neuritis or use a forearm crutch?

Being overlooked for a year-end promotion can be easy when the bosses see us in a wheelchair. Family may continue to ask more of us than we can deliver during the hectic holidays, or they just stop asking (or talking to us at all) all together...

For many of us, our financial situation has been compromised by MS. Whether it's lower income, high insurance costs or the price of medications; budgeting for gifts can make us feel more like Ebenezer than Elf.

We know it's not logical to think of it this way, but sometimes it feels like it's [Christmas on the Island of Misfit Toys](#) and we are destined to be marooned there for the rest of our lives; unwanted, unloved, and damaged misfits.

I have no cure for this sentiment. I can only offer to you the hard-fought knowledge that we do have worth and value, and that we can enrich the world around us if given the opportunity.

I urge those in our community who are finding this time of year to be particularly difficult on any level to reach out to your local office of the Society or to an [MS Navigator](#) (1-800-344-4867). They will be able to help you to find resources to get you through the difficult patch and off that island.

It is strength – rather than weakness – that leads us to ask for help when we feel alone, unloved and damaged. I have been there and can attest that my local chapter made all the difference in the world for me.

My name is Trevis Gleason and I live with multiple sclerosis. I may have a few things wrong with me, but I'm far from “damaged goods” and so are all of us.

Wishing you and your family the best of health.

Cheers
Trevis

Editor's Note: Not everyone with multiple sclerosis experiences each and every symptom we know can be caused by the disease. Likewise, not all of us experience many of the difficult emotional issues that MS can bring. Just because you haven't felt the things about which I write today, I would ask that we all show respect to those who have and are feeling them.