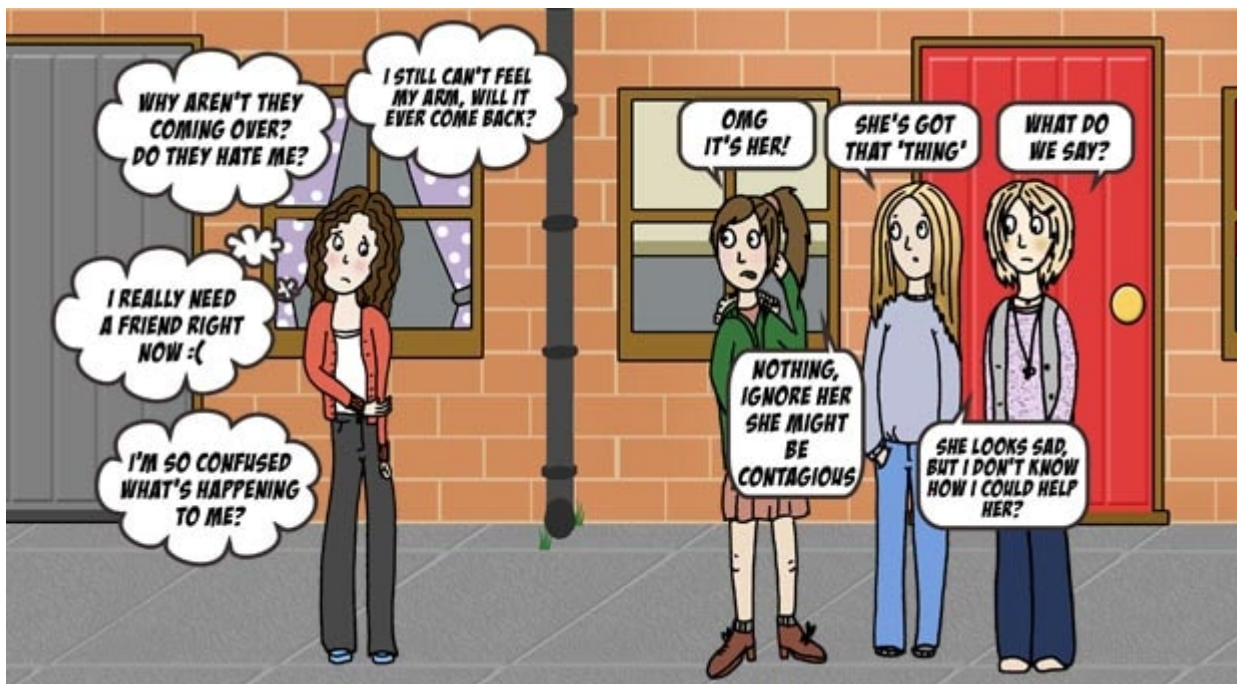


Dealing with Literal Loneliness



Being diagnosed with MS at any age is never fun, but when you're a young person diagnosed with MS, it seems to change more in your mind than just myelin!

I was diagnosed at just 22 years old. When I came out of the hospital after my diagnosis, I had to confront what seemed like a new life.

My hands were suddenly unusable thanks to the MS attack that led to my diagnosis. This meant my illustration business I'd been working hard to set up during university was now closed before it even had a chance. My clients pulled out after hearing about my diagnosis, and they weren't the only ones. The gift shops wanting to stock my products pulled out, the agent I had found pulled out, and the book contracts I had fell through because they were all worried I couldn't keep up with deadlines.

Worse than this, the friends I thought I was close to suddenly disappeared, too.

They didn't want to know me.

They stopped answering my texts and my social media messages. When I bumped into them on the street, they gave me blank expressions. All I could think was, "What have I done?" It pushed me further into my depression.

I literally felt like I was left with nothing.

I remember thinking, "Well, if I can't draw... who am I? If I don't have friends, who can help me?"

Maybe you're feeling the same?

All I kept saying to myself was, "Why me? Why had I been diagnosed with this... THING?"

There were so many "bad" people in this world, why did I get chosen to have this? I got angry. At myself and at the people around me.

I just didn't understand why the people I'd been closest to at university and the people I'd been living in apartments with just acted like I suddenly didn't exist?

I mean, I hadn't changed as a person, I wasn't now an alien... or a robot... or contagious?

I hated them for not reaching out.

Looking back now, I probably didn't help repair our relationship either; there were things I could have done to help them to understand.

I have an inkling now as to why they went silent. It took me a while to come to this conclusion, but as I did, I realized that things weren't as bleak as I first thought.

I realized that with these "friends," I'd spent our whole friendship not being true to who I was, but instead, was a restricted, shut off version of myself that molded into their circle.

I realized they had never supported me, and now when I needed them the most, they were gone—MS taught me who my true friends were, and it was certainly not these people. Maybe you've found or still finding this, too?

I consciously made the decision to not be angry with them but instead, I thanked them for abandoning me in my time of need. Crazy right?

The thing is... from this experience, I grew into the person that I am today.

A stronger, more independent, confident person who is now not afraid to put her opinion across and now has the best friends she could ever ask for.

MS came as a scare at first, but in time, it became something I used to propel me to be better. Something I now feel has given me a new purpose in life and now my purpose in life is simple: to help people.

To educate "non-MS" people about MS and help empower the people that have it—particularly young people (as if growing up wasn't hard enough, right?!)

You can't get rid of this inconvenient MS thing—so it's time to just embrace it, baby!