

Dear Dad



Dear Dad,

Telling you I have MS is the hardest thing I've had to do yet. Harder than telling you someone wanted to marry me, I was pregnant with the first grandchild or that a divorce was on the horizon. More difficult than I am moving away, I am changing jobs or I have fallen short of the dreams we dreamed together.

It is hard because you never fail to fight for me, want to fix the world to be a better place for me and never, ever want to see me hurt, fall short, or sick.



There is nothing you did, and nothing I did. Multiple sclerosis happens, and I need you to be with me now.

Beside me.

Because I am going to have to fight harder than I ever have before. I am calling on every resource and everything you have got to help me. I believe cures are possible; I believe a life worth living and living in a giant fashion are still available to me.

I am going to need a soft place to land on my hard days. The days where everything hurts, or I had a bladder accident, and I feel ashamed even though everyone says, "it is okay." Some days I am going to stumble and some days I will soar. MS is cruel and unpredictable. I need you to just stand guard over those times,

Dad, you were my first, and still are, my most formidable defender. 37 years later, and you still check in to make sure that me, your "kid" is hanging tough. And sometimes, I am flying high, and you get to brag of my accomplishments: my Bike MS adventures, my political impacts and my willingness to serve. We exchange selfies, and we don't even have to put a filter on it, because these are the good times. There are more good times than bad, but the bad creeps in along the edges, and I know the shadow on our best times, MS, lurks in your thoughts like it lurks in mine.

You didn't cause my multiple sclerosis.

I didn't cause my multiple sclerosis.



"Stand and deliver" is the phrase I grew up with, an encouragement to be a voice for others, to be a catalyst for change.

So, when I am encouraged to share my story, I am encouraging you too, because for the one million people affected by MS, there are one million dads, too. I know not everyone's story is like ours, not everyone has a champion, an ace in the hole, but I do. So, for once, just this once, I am willing to share, because people affected by MS need dads. and I need you.

We can do this. MS is simply no match for us.

So, hang in there, dad, because change is coming, the momentum is building, and we can

fight this the way we have fought everything else.

Together.