

Facing MS “Guilt”



“Oh, I’m sorry, am I in your way?” “I’m sorry, could you hold that door?” “I’m sorry to bother you, but could you help me reach that cup?” “I’m sorry to hold you up, but could you help me to the bathroom before you go out?” “I’m sorry, I’m just having a bad day and I’m moving kind of slow.” Enough already! What exactly am I apologizing for? Having multiple sclerosis? What is wrong with that picture?

When a chronic illness like MS barges into your life and the lives of those around you, it opens the door for negative emotions such as resentment, self-pity and guilt, to name just a few. Now, guilt can be a good thing—in moderation. It keeps us on the right road at times, but feeling guilty because one has MS is ridiculous. And yet, I am sorry to say, I do. I feel guilty.

I feel guilty that I cannot be more of a help to my family, especially my husband. We used to have a partnership and I can’t hold up my end. As my ability to manage the activities of a busy household decreases, his plate of responsibilities gets fuller. Sometimes, things even fall off. When it gets to this point, my dear husband is exhausted, frustrated and overwhelmed. I tell him how sorry I am for causing more work. The obligatory “It’s not your fault” is spoken and we try to get the wayward pieces of our life back on the plate.

Intellectually, I know it is truly not my fault for having MS, even though a close family member asked me upon learning my diagnosis what I had done to deserve it. I asked her what kind of hideous deed would someone have to do to deserve MS? Well, that conversation mercifully came to an abrupt end. That was a long time ago and the person has been a great help to me ever since, but emotionally her question still haunts my thoughts. Do you feel guilty that you have MS? Do you find yourself apologizing a little too much?