

Fighting MS with Everything You Have



MS saved my life. It helped me find balance. It helped me find my calling.

When I was diagnosed in 2014 with relapsing-remitting MS, I experienced double vision, vertigo, and bone-crushing fatigue while my arm had a mind of its own.

I went to Urgent Care, but they sent me to the emergency room. After hours of X-rays, blood draws, a CT scan and even an EEG, I was scheduled for an MRI the next day.



After the MRI, the doctor came in and said: “we’ll do another test to confirm, but I’m pretty sure you have MS. There is no cure, and it’s a degenerative disease.”

That night, I sat alone in the hospital room and just wondered what my life was going to be like. What changes was I going to have to make? How was my life going to be different?

My 16-year-old daughter, Ausjia, had never driven on the freeway before, but now she had to get me to work and herself to school by 7 a.m. for color guard practice. She went grocery shopping because I couldn't make it through the whole store without my legs feeling like I was walking in sand.

You don't think about things like driving and grocery shopping before MS. You just do them. You take them for granted.

I'm a single mom—an Army soldier, a mixed martial arts (MMA) official. I'm also a teacher, a volunteer and an advocate.



During the first year after my diagnosis, I started to acknowledge that I wasn't a victim and didn't have to act like one. I don't always get to choose everything MS does to my body, but I get to choose my response. I get to choose my lifestyle.

Am I going to let MS do whatever it wants to me, or am I going to fight every step of the way?

I've been a fighter my whole life, so I'm not going to stop now.

Initially, I had the mindset that I can't let anyone see the pain or the fatigue because I can't show weakness. But I'm not. I'm showing strength when I accept help. Because even as a strong, independent woman, I can't do this alone. This is the kind of journey no one should take alone.

And that's what inspired me to find my mission and answer my calling: helping people with MS live healthier lives.

Before I was diagnosed, I was morbidly obese. It can be difficult when you have more than 70 pounds to lose, but I approached it the way I approach all the challenges in my life... head on. I started educating myself about nutrition and dietary principles. Once I started to eat healthier and saw a little bit of weight drop off, I knew it was time to add movement into my life, and that's when I started to take dancing more seriously.

I chose Polynesian dance because it's beautiful and graceful, but more importantly, because the culture welcomed the big girl into the fold. Later, I added the gym and was finally in reach of my goal weight when MS struck. Despite the diagnosis and having to adapt I did it. I lost 80 lbs and achieved my goal.

I'm now a health and wellness coach, and I want to use my experience and my passion to help others.

I've created an online show called Beyond Surviving to Thriving – Look Better, Feel Better, BE Better by Kicking MS and Other Autoimmunity in the Butt.

The series tackles topics like gut health, hormones, managing fatigue, essential oils, cognitive challenges, inflammation and toxic load, yoga, and guided imagery for stress and anxiety. It features prominent health professionals such as: neurologists, functional medicine doctors, naturopathic doctors, nurse practitioners, health coaches, a psychologist and more. My goal is to connect people to strategies and information to help them live their best lives.

From participating in Walk MS to volunteering in my community to living my healthiest life, I'm going to fight this disease with everything I have, and I want to help others do the same.

I'm not the woman I was before MS, but that doesn't make me any less.

Editor's Note:

To check out Yvette's free online series, visit

[**https://www.BeyondSurvivingToThrivingNow.com**](https://www.BeyondSurvivingToThrivingNow.com).

See Yvette's tips for living a dynamic life with an autoimmune disorder at

[**https://www.YvetteBrisco.com/Energetic**](https://www.YvetteBrisco.com/Energetic).