

## Finding Your New Normal



**It's 9 am on a Friday morning as I sit patiently awaiting an IV so I can begin my infusion. I make small talk with the nurses after taking my routine pregnancy test to ensure my heavy-duty medicine doesn't harm my apparent unborn child. Unfazed, I ask Jenny how her daughter is and then look around the room to see if any of the other usual suspects are here. Within a few minutes, I have 115 mL of Tysabri being pumped into my veins that will slow down my overactive immune system for next 30 days. As I sit back to begin two hours of frivolous busy work to pass the time, I can't help but think to myself: This is my new normal.**

When I learned that I had multiple sclerosis, it felt as if my whole world came crashing down. I was full of emotions - terrified for what this could mean for my future and angry that I couldn't do anything about it. It took me a good year to shake out all of the ramifications of learning of my incurable illness, but eventually I came to terms with it. **This is my new normal.**

Through that process, I learned firsthand the true meaning of the statement "time heals all wounds." After the initial shock wore off, I had months to research what having MS entails and I empowered myself with the knowledge and tools I needed to tackle it. Time allowed me to talk to others with the disease and to consult with specialists that, too, gave me confidence I could be okay. Time gave me the ability to accept my illness and what it may mean for my life moving forward. **This is my new normal.**

One of the scariest aspects of my first MRI was learning the truth behind my symptoms. But the actual process of getting the scan can be equally as terrifying to someone who's never

experienced one before. You're placed in a large contained machine for hours at a time without the ability to move. You sit there with your own thoughts while it makes the loudest screeching sounds for minutes on end. That first MRI was so daunting to me but now, I know what to expect. Time and experience gave me that gift. I now ask each MRI attendant for a few things to make the process easier: headphones so I can play music, a towel to cover my eyes from the bright lights and insight into how long each scan will be. **This is my new normal.**

While no two days are the same with MS, I have generally come to expect symptoms based on the location of my lesions. My vision will never be the same because of the one on my optic nerve. And other symptoms just seem to come with the diagnosis, like bouts of fatigue, numbness and tingles that shoot from my head to my toes. While I'm always susceptible to new symptoms, new lesions and relapses, I'm getting to know my body, my limits and my triggers. **This is my new normal.**

So whatever you're going through – no matter how big or small – rest assured, the shock will wear off, you will adjust and time will be there to help you recover. Whether it's days, weeks, months or years, you too, will find your new normal.