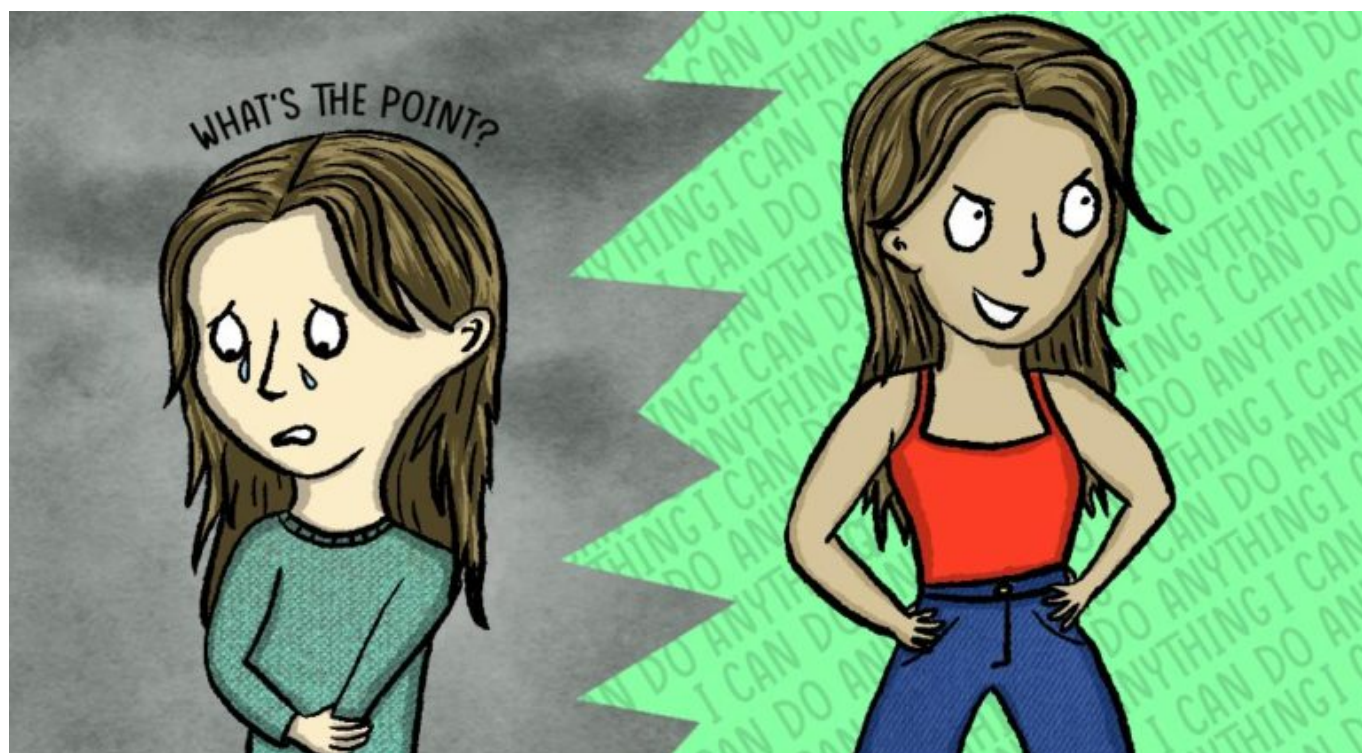


How Hypnotherapy Helped Me Deal with an MS Flare



A couple of months ago, I thought my world had ended. Sounds a little dramatic, I know; that was where my mind was at the time.

I was finally starting my career as an illustrator. I'd spent a few months making a portfolio and was just about to start the exciting part of emailing agencies with my new work.

Then suddenly, my hands started to feel tight and burnt, and I started feeling numbness from the neck down. As the days progressed, so did the intensity of the numbness. I also had weakness in my left leg and occasionally in my hands. These symptoms mimicked the initial ones before my diagnosis and triggered my mind back to that moment when I was first diagnosed and terrified.

As time passed, I became stuck in that downward cycle and grew more and more anxious, depressed and unsettled. I couldn't hold my pen to draw anymore. The anxiety worsened.

"What is happening to me? Is this a relapse? Will it get worse? What does this mean? What's the point of life? I'm too ill to do anything. I can't get an illustration job when I don't trust my body."

My husband had noticed I hadn't been myself and suggested I try hypnotherapy, which he'd used to help him through some anxieties of his own. He told me to give it a try.

“Hypnotherapy?” It felt odd, and I didn’t know what it was; however, if it could help, I was willing to try anything. I wanted so badly to be back to my confident self and feel better again.

“Ok fine, let’s give it a go.” In tears, I booked the initial consultation with his hypnotherapist, which was based 2.5 hours away from where we lived. The hypnotherapy practice had started doing sessions virtually to help more patients.

At first, I was super scared and anxious. I didn’t know what would happen or what the hypnotherapist does.

We spoke a lot. He taught me more about how the brain works and how it had been installing defense mechanisms to protect me. Fascinating.

He started the session by asking, “what’s been good this week?” It threw me off guard; I’d prepared everything in my mind to tell him it was not going right.

The more I spoke, the more he reframed back what I’d said more positively.

At the end of the 30-minute talking part of the session, he asked me to relax where I was sitting and close my eyes.

Inside I started freaking out, “close my eyes? I don’t even know you! What will you do to me?” To me, hypnosis was what you saw performers do at shows where they get people to start clucking like a chicken randomly!

I trusted the process anyway and sat and calmly listened as he spoke softly to my subconscious brain, asking it to release the defense mechanism that wasn’t needed.

I remember thinking, “wow, this is what my brain needs to do.” At the end of the 20-minute hypnosis part of the session, I felt so heavy, like every thought I’d ever had was poured back into my head. My brain had a lot to process.

The next day I woke up a brand-new person. I felt back to my more substantial, more resilient self, who won’t let things stop her. For the first time in months, I didn’t cry. It felt like that mental state I was in was just a chapter that I’d finished. It’s time to move on.

Coping with the MS flare suddenly felt more manageable. Suddenly it was something I could cope with.

I still had the flare symptoms, but I carried on anyway. I reached out to agents with a “the worst they can say is no” attitude. I’d had the agent’s details for months, but felt too scared to reach out till now because there was a part of me that didn’t feel good enough and that my work wasn’t good enough. The hypnotherapist broke that cycle that was holding me back. I created a coloring book using illustrations I already had and was buzzing with ideas again.

Hypnotherapy changed my life. When writing this, I've had four sessions, and I'm a more robust version of what I was before. From hypnotherapy, I've learned techniques to minimize my anxiety, had helped to acknowledge why I am the way I am and where behaviors come from - plus how to deal with them when they arise. I have the skills I need to cope with the unexpected and cope with uncertainty now. As MSers, we have a lot of both. The hypnotherapist even gave me a hypnosis recording to listen to each day which lessens stress and anxiety.

There are many misconceptions about hypnosis and hypnotherapy. I feel proud to be in a position to write about holding my hand up and saying, "I've had hypnotherapy, and it helped me to cope with my MS flare." It's been an invaluable tool for being able to cope with life and uncertainty.

Sometimes, an unpredictable disease like MS sometimes means exploring interesting ways to deal with the emotional challenges it brings our way!

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