

# Lessons for My Children



**I still check on my boys every night—I don't think they will ever be too old for me to peek in while they sleep, marveling at these gifts I have been given.**

They're growing up so fast, and some nights I can't help but worry. That the world won't be kind to them. That life won't treat them fairly. That I won't always be there to protect them.

The truth is, it's a fact of life that they will hurt at some point in their lives. They will be scared, as all people are. They will grieve, as we all do. I can't stop them from feeling pain in this life, but I can equip them to face it. It's my job as parent to do this.

And as a parent living with MS, it sometimes feels like there's an extra urgency to equipping them with these life skills. There are also several life lessons I hope they learn from me and from my journey.

## **Practice Compassion**

There's the familiar saying that everyone is fighting a battle you know nothing about. This is definitely true for someone with an invisible illness. I hope my kids recognize this in me and in others, and choose kindness and compassion. Always.

## **Don't Wait**

Nobody knows what's going to happen tomorrow, but uncertainty is especially prevalent for someone with MS. Since my diagnosis I've tried not to wait for "someday"—I want to go after

my dreams now, which is what spurred me to finish my first novel and pursue my dream to be an author. I want to teach my kids to do the same—to follow their dreams and go after all that life has to offer.

### **Courage and Resiliency**

In the face of that uncertainty, I also hope that I can teach them to face each new day with courage. And when new challenges come, I hope that I can show strength and resiliency so that my kids can learn to get back up after they fall—to try again, keep trying and to never give up.

### **Laugh When You Can**

Sometimes on tough days, it seems like there's nothing to smile about. When I'm feeling fatigued, when the heat is getting to me, when the future seems bleak, laughter can be hard to come by. But I want to show my kids that life might be hard, but it is also beautiful. Finding that beauty—finding a reason to smile, or to laugh when you want to cry—can make all the difference.

### **Seek Support**

But sometimes that isn't possible. You can't always be strong; I have certainly showed them that. I know they have seen my fear and my frustration. And I think that's okay. I do want my kids to be confident, independent and capable. But I also want them to recognize that sometimes even confident, independent and capable people need help—and that you should ask for help when you need it. In fact, that's what family and friends are here for: to pick each other up when we fall.

### **Unconditional Love**

Most of all, I want them to learn that when you love someone, you love them through everything—for better or worse, in sickness and in health. I hope that my husband and I model that for our children, each and every day.

Love is the most important thing, and that's what I feel most of all when I peek in on them each night. I hope that they always know how deeply they are loved. No matter what happens in this life—no matter what our future with this illness holds—that is one thing that will never change.