

Made Strong by Dance: How Dance Saved and Continues to Save My Life



I will never forget the day I knew something was seriously wrong. I was in a funk dance fitness class dancing. It was a fast paced, heart pumping, dance fitness class.

I started out fine, following the warm up routine as usual. As I was learning the choreography, the right side of my body, specifically my legs, suddenly felt very heavy and weren't moving. My head felt light.

"What was happening," I wondered. "Keep moving," I told myself.

I tried to hide it by making the moves small, but that didn't help. My legs wouldn't move. I made eye contact with the instructor as to give him a clue that something wasn't right, as if that would help the situation. I have no idea if he noticed that something was wrong. My mind was racing. I knew at that moment I needed to get to a doctor right away.

I had been having what I now know as flare up symptoms about three months prior. I always thought it was something with my back because I've always had back issues. At the time, I was a dance fitness instructor, so I was very in tune with my body. I was also very hard on my body.

After numerous tests, I was told four words that forever changed by life, "You have multiple sclerosis."

Hearing those words as a single woman sent my head spinning.

I am a very stubborn person and decided that I was not going to give in to this thing called MS. F*ck that! I decided I was going to use it as an opportunity to get in the best shape of my life.

I grew up as what I call a “dance studio baby,” as my mom had a dance studio. I know how powerful and healing movement can be.

Studies have shown that dancing “improves balance, gait, walking speed, and reaction time, as well as cognitive and fine motor performance.” These are all things that I battle every day. For me, dance is the answer. Dance is my passion.

The definition of dance, according to the dictionary, is “a series of movements that match the speed and rhythm of a piece of music.”

There are many forms of dance ranging from ballet to ballroom. Other forms of movement including tai chi, yoga, or even stretching are also considered dance. Artistic expression such as painting can even be considered dance.

I may have had a challenging day and may be tired as hell, but once I start moving, my body starts responding. The circulation improves in my body, bringing warmth to my legs which ultimately helps me function better, which is the goal.

As my body changed, I had to learn how to use my new body. That meant making moves with my lower body smaller, while emphasizing the movement of my upper body. I learned how to dance using a chair. It also meant giving my body rest. Believe me, it was hard in the beginning — I had nights of frustration and tears, but I refused to let this thing called MS stop me from dancing.

My advice to anyone out there overcoming MS is to find some type of movement and immerse yourself in it. Don't worry about what you look like. Whatever you do, do not give in to this thing called MS. Keep moving!

There was a time I danced to be a performer; now I dance to live a normal life.