

MS Doesn't Stop You From Being a Great Parent



Parenting is hard. This blog post could end here because the truth is that parenting is hard for all parents, regardless of ability. And parenting with a chronic illness feels in a league of its own.

I was officially diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2007. When my son, Jack, was born in 2016, my outlook on life shifted. I was no longer fighting MS for myself but now, fighting to give my son the future he deserves. While Jack was not a planned pregnancy, he certainly has been my greatest blessing. He gave my life the purpose that I didn't know was missing. But I worried that I would not get back to my previous baseline; I still haven't. What I have done is learn to slow down, listen to my body and accept my reality for what it is.

Parenting with MS poses challenges that others may not understand. While my son does not have MS, he certainly has to live with MS. I've always carried a lot of guilt about how my disease would impact his quality of life.

A pivotal moment was when I started really listening and talking to my son. Hearing about how, on the days that I felt defeated as a parent, he innately focused on the positive and fun parts. This changed my frame of mind and gave me comfort in knowing that I'm not doing such a bad job after all.

My son doesn't see our adjustments as a burden, but as adventures filled with love. We could all be more understanding and forgiving of our shortfalls. All of us have things that make us

feel insecure and inadequate; it's how we handle those obstacles that truly matters. I choose grace and positivity.

My intention is not to make light of multiple sclerosis. My goal is to make the burden of a chronic illness lighter for children. I want to make it lighter for my child. My priority is to be a good mother in the eyes of my son; that is all that matters to me. I need to know that I am giving him the best life I can offer and that he is living a wonderful life in spite of life's hindrances.

When Jack was born, due to my cognitive issues, I decided to write "letters" about moments that I wanted to remember. Whether it be his first word, food or the days that I felt I failed him as a mother. I would privately open up to my son about how precious he is to me, how hard I'm fighting to be a good mother, and how much I enjoy our daily adventures.

I have always tried to be completely transparent with Jack about my diagnosis; so, when he turned two, I began to search for materials to offer support and affirmation that he isn't the only child with a parent battling a chronic illness.

When I reached out to MS organizations worldwide for information, I quickly learned about the unmet demand for educational literature for children on chronic illnesses, and I became determined to fill it. I found that the materials were not geared specifically for younger children. I didn't want to focus on sophisticated terms like "demyelination" or "relapse."

With support, tenacity and drive, my children's book was born. [**"Some Days: A tale of love, ice cream, and my mom's chronic illness"**](#) follows a mother and son as they navigate through the unpredictable obstacles of parenting with a chronic illness. The recognition the book received has been moving and motivating.

Through interactions with people who've connected with the book, I've realized that we all place so much burden of guilt on our shoulders. When we stop to actually listen to the people we love the most, we will find that we are doing a pretty great job in spite of the hurdles.

I'm in no way a perfect parent, but I've found that creating meaningful memories with your loved ones is always possible. To me, it is about teaching them that they are resilient, loved and going to be okay; even if their version of "okay" doesn't look like everyone else's.

In closing, you and your love are all your child needs. Be proud of the human you are preparing for the world. Our children are kind, empathetic and resilient because of these moments. Breathe.