

MS Gave Me a New Lifestyle



My name is Natalina. I am 35 years old and live in Sweden. I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in June 2021. Six months after my diagnosis, I met with what would be my MS team, organized by the neurology practice at my hospital. The MS team consists of a doctor, a nurse, a physiotherapist, an occupational therapist and a counselor.

With my MS, I have difficulties balancing, dizziness, physical fatigue, tremor, spasticity in both legs and heat sensitivity. I can't walk for more than a couple of minutes before my legs give up. I'm also struggle with ADHD, mixed anxiety and depressive disorder.

My physiotherapist brought up that a solution for me and my severe fatigue was to start to work out at home. I could not in my wildest imagination understand how I would be able to work out when I was suffering from fatigue. But the physiotherapist somehow saw past this and saw me, Natalina, who has an incredibly strong will and drive. I was given an individual work out plan to do at home using only my own body weight, and I promised myself to give it 3 times a week for 30 days.

On December 25, 2021, I laid down on the floor and did of the basic moves I was given. I remember that I couldn't stand on one leg without holding onto something, and I couldn't steady my hips when I was doing a hip thrust. Sweat was pouring, and it was a very hard 10 minutes, but I made it!

After a few weeks I found the workout was getting fun, so I increased the duration. Pretty quickly I got positive effects from working out. I wasn't so tired anymore, and I noticed that I

was getting stronger and stronger. The best effect was the feeling of all the endorphins dancing inside my body. So, I felt increasingly motivated to work out, even though I was still living in grief of having MS.

Even though I enjoyed working out, I realized that I no longer have the same capacity in my body as I had before I was diagnosed with MS. My thoughts were the same as they always have been, but it feels like I'm borrowing someone else's body.



As I mentioned before, I also struggle with mixed anxiety and depression. It means I can't take for granted that I will actually work out. What you can't see does in fact exist. For example, my never-ending road to even completing a workout, due to all the daily obstacles that get in the way. Many times, I don't get going as I planned. I've spent many hours looking up at the ceiling because I can't even bring myself to do simple things like eat, get dressed or unload the dishwasher.

The hardest thing about being broken inside is that it doesn't show on the outside.

Despite all the positives of working out, I still have to be honest and say that so far, I have not genuinely wholeheartedly wanted to work out ever. Actually, I just want to lie down and sleep under a rock. I have cried many times because my body refuses to cooperate with my brain.

But for me, fitness is more than just fitness, because it brings so many positive effects both psychologically and physically. I really want to invest in my own body so that it becomes as

strong as possible for an uncertain future because I have MS.



Daily I am forced to take detours to my MS symptoms. But I try to see it as an opportunity to find solutions so that my conditions will be as good as possible. I may not be able to work out like most others do, but I can try in a different way, and I just have to dare to try one more time so that I can reach my goals.

Even if you have disabling symptoms, you can try to do some type of exercises, such as moving parts of your body that you know works for a few minutes. The “small” can become the big in the long run. What I mean is that regardless of the number of minutes you invest in some form of exercise, it is positive for your body, and you deserve it.

Throughout my life I have been dissatisfied with myself and have many self-critical thoughts about my appearance. That’s because I’ve suffered from obesity my whole life. I weighed 242 lbs. when I was 10 years old as an example. Today, for the first time, I have learned to love myself and my new body, just as it is. Today I have a routine of working out 5-7 hours each week at my local gym. I have lost 75 lbs. so far for my health.



I would never have started working out if it wasn't for being diagnosed with MS and in some strange way, a part of me is thankful that I got MS because it has given me the opportunity to a new lifestyle and become as strong as a bear.

I want to inspire everyone to try to work out. The small can become the big and strong someday. Be patient, don't give up and be kind to yourself.

Editor's Note: Find more resources on exercise and MS on the [Society website](#).