

My Children, Let's Talk MS



As a father, you want the best for your children. You want your children to understand the importance of hard work, getting good grades in school, being attentive, your word is your bond, respect your elders and always take time to pray. These are some attributes that were instilled in me, growing up as a black youth/man in North Carolina.

As your children get older (I have a son and daughter), you worry about them growing up, staying out of trouble, getting prepared for high school graduation and moving onward to college. Then moving forward to the next chapter of their life - graduating college and start working full time and paying bills. Again, you want the best for your children.

But here is a situation, you cannot control - being a parent and being diagnosed with primary progressive multiple sclerosis (PPMS).

During my years with PPMS (it can get on your last nerves), I have had to remain positive. I informed my children; **MS doesn't stop me from living my life, because I am the captain of this ship (my body).** I have expressed my feelings/emotions over the years with my children and the importance of exercise, eating healthy, maintaining good mental and spiritual health, and talking with my neurologist. Most important: to keep learning and of course, Goggle (it is my friend for searching and finding).

My children (now young adults) are always asking questions:

Dad, what are the side effects of your medicine?

There are side effects for any medication that you are prescribed.

Dad, I noticed some individuals with MS are in a wheelchair. Will you be in a wheelchair?

Yes, there are individuals with MS and there are some who have MS and are living without wheelchair. At the present time, I don't have a wheelchair or have a need for one.

Dad, is MS a death sentence?

No, MS is not a death sentence; however, everyone will leave this earth as we know it.

Dad, is there cure for MS?

At the present time, there is no known cure for MS; however, they (doctors/researchers/medical community) are making steady progress to end this disease.

I always inform my children and wife about my MS conversations between me and my neurologist. Initially, it was tough, but I became transparent and did something more important than my ego/pride - **communicating with my children.**

Fellas, the most important part when talking to your children about MS is maintaining open communication. **Fathers and dads - did you read that? Maintain open communication about your MS.** You know, it is sometimes hard for us (men) to talk about our medical conditions. But it's your call!

I like to leave you with this:

Leaving an inheritance (materialistic items and financial funds) is great; however, leaving a legacy of communication is more important. The communication legacy with your child(ren) about life tough choices/decisions (good and not so good) is everlasting.