

Rise Up



Resilience is the capacity to recover from difficulties and finding your strength within.

Where do I begin? I'm 39 years old and have been through my share of difficulties. If I've learned anything, it's that no matter what happens, you have to get back up and fight all the curve balls that this life throws you.

2005 and 2006 were bittersweet life changing years for me. I tragically lost my 2-year-old son in June 2005. To say I was devastated would be an understatement. Are there any words to describe that kind of pain? Before the shock of it all could settle in, I unexpectedly became pregnant with my daughter. I didn't even know how to feel.

In May 2006 on Mother's Day, I was blessed with my daughter and immediately felt the warmth of her love. I felt I was given a second chance in life. She was my anchor, and she saved me in so many ways.

Life seemed to be moving forward. I had been hired at a new job, and I was set to begin that month. But I woke up one day in early October and noticed that I had numbness in my torso area from my spine to my navel. I didn't think much of it. I just figured it was a pinched nerve or something. I waited to see if it would subside, it didn't. I called my physician, and she ordered an MRI and a neurologist appointment.

I was confident that it would be something that would resolve itself, but after a second MRI, the neurologist told me what he was about to tell me would change my life forever.

He broke the devastating news I had MS.

I was in shock. I arrived at my mother's house and when I saw her holding my baby, I broke down crying. I was so scared. What would I do now? Will my daughter grow up without her mother? Why me? So much loss, my life was falling apart. All hope was lost once again. I must have Googled everything about this disease and had so many questions. I learned that this disease affects everyone differently, and there was no one way to deal with this. I just had to bounce back and be stronger than ever—not only for me but for my family.

I was determined to not have MS control my life. And that's just what I did—I moved on, I had no choice. I was learning to live this new life, and I was getting back into a routine when, once again, that cringing familiar feeling was back. Now it was my leg and other side of my torso area, I had vision changes, and the fatigue was overwhelming.

I went back to that dark place where I felt all hope was lost once again. I was sick, I couldn't do much and had to leave work. I couldn't handle it all: a one-year-old, a stressful job, steroids, injections. I needed to be rescued. I prayed for some answers and clarity. I was depressed, 280 pounds, a little over five foot one, 27, and in an abusive relationship. I was so angry, fed up and tired. I felt cheated.

I desperately needed some change in my life, and that is what I did... again. I bought a house on my own. I left my toxic relationship, changed my diet and started to exercise lightly. It was then I began to understand the meaning of resiliency in my own life.

I've learned that this life is like a yo-yo—you always have to prepare for bad things to happen. But I can reassure you that it will be okay. My story isn't linear. Every time I thought I was on a positive trajectory, I've been shot down. It's been marked by ups and downs, and it will surely be like that forever. I struggle every day, but I won't give up. I know I have to be resilient, be a role model for my daughter and others going through similar problems, never lose faith, and most of all, hope.