

The Reluctant Athlete



In the months that it took for me to get my diagnosis, I became increasingly desperate for one. The 10 months that bridged November 2015 to September 2016 were a source of frustration and confusion. Why wasn't my leg working? Would I ever get feeling back in my left leg? Will I have to use a cane for my entire life? What is wrong with me? While steroid treatment and plasmapheresis treatment brought relief, I was still in search of a final answer. At the end of August, I got my answer. I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. The next chapter of my life officially began.

Since my diagnosis, I've been on a program of an aggressive course of treatment that has so far been very successful. [I've chronicled](#) the importance of rest and the amazing support that Kate has provided in this crucial part of our fight with MS. Conversations with my neurologist surfaced another important piece to this fight: exercise.

I don't like to exercise.

Not a groundbreaking statement, I know, particularly when you see the staggering statistics related to obesity and heart disease amongst my fellow Americans, but I have never been interested in exercise. While I ran track and cross country in high school, my interest in exercise soon waned. In college, I was much more interested in a few hours at a bar than a few hours in the gym. During this time of obnoxious youth, I proudly bragged about how much I didn't exercise. When I gained more weight as an adult, I became delusional enough to join gyms (I'd say between membership fees and actual visits, I paid \$87 per visit), but have never been able to commit to a consistent exercise routine. Ironically, what changed me was getting sick.

For the better part of a year, Tuesday nights have meant yoga. After a day teaching 100 tenth graders and a night of partnering with my wife to do homework and prepare dinner for my two young sons, I push myself to a yoga class. When my alarm goes off at 5:30 a.m., I push myself to get on a bike. During the summer, it was to ride 25 miles around my town, while during the school year, it's to get at least half an hour in on a stationary bike in our bedroom before everyone gets up. I still don't want to do it, but now, I make sure that I do.



Don't get me wrong, I don't say these things to make myself sound like some type of hero or world class athlete. Instead, I'm realizing that fighting my disease has forced me to change my life. I've gone from the lazy braggart to the reluctant athlete. There have been many times that having MS had made me feel helpless. My treatment and a commitment to exercise give me hope and a feeling that I am in control of my fight.

I set my goal high to participate in my first Bike MS event in New York City on October 21.

And I did it.

Stay tuned to read about my experience on the ride.