

# Unexpected Reality



**Hello Everyone,**

**My name is Erick Gutierrez, and this is my first time posting a blog. I have been living with my case of relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis (RRMS) for about eight years, and I count my MS as my blessing... and a curse. I recently graduated university with my bachelor's degree in December of 2020 and turned 22 in January. I never imagined achieving this much, but life is filled with many surprises!**

I was officially diagnosed with RRMS in 2013, but I had an incident that indicated signs of MS in 2012. The morning of December 12, 2012, my parents rushed me to the emergency room because I woke up vomiting and with head/neck pain. I was in the hospital for nine days, which is all a blur to me. The only things I remember from those days is having an MRI done and a spinal tap, but I am sure there was more. The doctors suspected MS after all the exams, but they did not want to jump to conclusions without observing a little more. A month later, the official diagnosis came to my ears.

I remember being at my doctor's office, with my mother, crying at the news of being diagnosed with a disease that we knew nothing about. I am sure my doctor tried explaining to us more about MS, but my mom and I were too stunned with the news and were not paying much attention. After receiving the news, my racing mind decided to search the Internet for more information about MS. Doing so was not the best idea since what I was looking for, at that time, was the negatives... I found plenty of those. Puberty and a life-changing diagnosis do not mix well together. That year was my darkest year. I felt so alone

and helpless being a 14-year-old fighting his own mind every day.

High school was a rollercoaster ride, an even crazier ride living with MS. My freshman and sophomore years, I felt I was living the average high school life, except with the thought of an impending doom in his head. There were no new drastic symptoms besides the need of glasses. Junior and senior years were not as smooth as I would have wanted them to be. I developed difficulties with walking and heat intolerance. I quit marching band because I could not manage the marching and the hot and humid Houston weather. I had lost my one interest in high school, but it gave me more time to focus on the future. By the time graduation came, I was upset for the events I had missed out on, given my situation, but I was at peace with myself (which was way more important to me).

I had decided to attend university in San Antonio which is three hours away from home; a good distance to be away from home, but also close in case if something happened. For the two years and a half that I was living on-campus, I took care of myself, mentally and physically, and managed my course work, something my parents were worried about since I would be by myself. I was also fortunate to have resources that my doctors had given that assisted me in the journey, and I had started on Rituximab. I completed my bachelor's degree in December of 2020. Life took enough from me in high school and decided to take it easy on me for university.

Now I am at home with my parents trying to figure how to proceed with life during a pandemic with MS, something I never even thought of in my life. I may have lost the ability to do things that I enjoyed, but I have learned more than I imagined. I noticed that my family has come together closer since my diagnosis, I picked up new interests that I would have never thought about, and, as a person, I have grown. My mindset has changed and matured to accept the reality and try my hardest to live with it and proceed and succeed. I plan to take all the lessons I have learned into the future with me and keep them even closer when the cure to this disease arrives.

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Editor's Note: Learn more about pediatric MS on [the Society website](#).