

Who Am I?



When battling a chronic illness occupies the better part of a lifetime, it is tempting, though a trap, to use health issues as the focal point to focus the camera on your own life. What do you do? Oh, I have multiple sclerosis. But what do you do? I have MS. That's a fulltime job, pal. For the many who feel doctored to death, it sure does feel that way. The idea that we are trading in a broader identity can be lost. Pity. We can lose sight of who we really are.

I am the husband of a beautiful, successful woman. Our identities have merged, and we take from each other. Our bodies, too, have come together, and we have given to the other. Who are you? A guy with MS. Perhaps I am missing something here.

Who am I? you ask. Well, a father, I say. I have three who are young adults. The oldest works in Shanghai. He works building nuclear power plants and is fluent in Mandarin. His brother is a television reporter in Spokane, his sister studying in Prague now. If you ask them who I am, they will say a New York Times best selling author or simply a pain in the ass. I doubt the letters MS will cross their lips.

I, of course, do not lose sight of all I no longer can do. Those limitations stare me down and wear me down. I am less than I was and feel doctored to death. People like me spend too many hours in ruts and no longer see ourselves for who we really are.

I am legally blind, having endured too many bouts of optic neuritis, which steals vision from many in broad daylight. Also, I am blind in a more far reaching way. No longer do I see myself for what I am. I am a captive of loss and can only see what is missing. What is intact and still there is around the bend, out of sight and sadly beyond memory.

Another connection broken.