

# Your Story Matters



**Somewhere along the way, it became easier for me to talk about my multiple sclerosis diagnosis.**

**Don't get me wrong, getting into the details of the symptoms and uncertainty leading up to that diagnosis can still be a painful topic to discuss. But over seven years later, it's become less awkward for me to tell someone "I have MS."**

Of course, one might say I took a giant leap beyond simply saying "I have MS" to writing an entire book about a woman coming to terms with her MS diagnosis. That story came out in March, and as amazing as it's been, it was pretty terrifying to put such a personal (albeit, fictionalized) story out there for anyone to read.

But now that it's been out in the world for a few months, I've become increasingly more comfortable with it. For anyone else thinking about sharing more of their personal story with MS—whether it's talking to a friend, writing a blog post, or speaking at church—I would encourage you to go for it!

Here are some reasons why.

## **Helping Yourself**

First of all, it can be helpful to you on a personal level. I first wrote "The Speed of Light" for me, and it was incredibly therapeutic to do so—it helped me process some of the fears and uncertainties I struggle with regarding living with MS.

That in itself was wonderful. But also, sharing my story has been incredibly freeing, and I'm proud of it. I essentially wrote the story I needed when I was first diagnosed, and when I decided to share it, I could only hope that it would resonate with others.

## **Making Connections**

And it has. That has actually been the most amazing part of this whole journey—receiving messages from people living with MS and other chronic illnesses who have felt seen and represented. It's been wonderful to connect, to not feel alone in this fight.

Those messages have made any critique more than worth it. And critique may come if you decide to share your story. It did for me. But I realized that no two people experience MS the exact same way, so all I could do was tell my own story, my own truth, as authentically as possible. It's the same for you.

## **Opening Doors**

While no one story can speak for everyone's experience, I hope that putting my story out there can help open doors for more stories to be told about living with MS and other chronic illnesses. There are so many unique stories to be told.

And I hope that those of us living with MS continue to tell them. Because we deserve to be the heroes of our own stories—we deserve our happily ever afters, just as we are.

In the end, telling your story—who you tell, how much, and when—is entirely up to you. Whether you keep your story in your heart, tell a few friends, or tell the whole world, I hope you know that your story matters. Your voice matters.

**You** matter.