

Just keep going



It's not always easy, but I'm grateful for everything I can do.

by **Linda S. Bridges**

I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2001 at age 45, after two exacerbations. The second relapse came after my boyfriend died. Both happened within a year during extreme hot spells in the Northeast, where I live.

Perhaps seven or eight years before those two exacerbations, I went to a neurologist because of numbness in my pelvic region.

After I had an MRI and spinal tap, the doctor told me that I might have MS, but that the symptoms would probably disappear.

And he said, "Don't lose any sleep over it."

After the two relapses, I was in the neurologist's office, awaiting results from my latest tests. I was sitting next to a woman about my age, in a wheelchair, bone thin, who told me, "That's what I have." Looking at her, I thought, "That is what will happen to me."

Shortly after my diagnosis, I ran into an acquaintance. He introduced me to his wife, Mary, and asked if I was OK. I told them about my MS diagnosis. Mary said very little, but shortly after the encounter, they came into my place of work. Mary told me that she, too, had MS, and that it changed her life. Here was another woman—my age, walking and talking—who gave me hope.

Mary had never told anyone about her diagnosis and was amazed that I was so open about it. She gave me her neurologist's name (and oh, what a positive change), and introduced me to another woman who was about 10 years older than I was. We had tea, and her advice was life-changing—and life-saving. "Keep doing everything you are doing," she told me. "Walk your dog, hike, keep doing the work you are doing, keep doing your yoga. Don't stop."

That advice may well have changed the course of my life and my disease. Yoga may also have saved me. Not to mention the love, total support and encouragement of friends.

I have participated in both a local Walk MS and Bike MS. That was harder! I walked four miles yesterday.

My attitude, too, has been shaped by watching friends with brain cancer, breast cancer, and many other diseases and ailments. I am alive, I am cognizant of my life, I can read, do yoga, walk miles, and I am alive!

My experience is not every woman's or every person's. Part of it may be pure luck, part may be attitude, part may be medication. I use a needle for injections and hate it, but do not dare not to. I am lucky, blessed and so very grateful to be living and independent.

Machu Picchu is on my agenda. I refuse to stop, and I will keep walking, talking and driving people crazy!

Linda S. Bridges lives in Scarborough, Maine.

Learn from others about how they embraced their MS. Start or join a conversation on [MS Connection](#).