

Supporting your relationships



by Cyndi Zagieboylo



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As we move into summer, living with multiple sclerosis can be especially challenging. Warm weather may cause symptoms to flare up, creating a greater need for support, including, perhaps, mobility equipment.

Selecting the right physical support is one thing; managing the emotional reactions that can accompany a change in physical status is another—even if it's only a temporary change. In this issue of **Momentum**, we discuss strategies for addressing these emotional challenges and for finding the right mobility device for greater independence. (See "[Taking the next step.](#)")

The emotional aspects of coping with MS can add to the difficulty of living with the disease. Sometimes, too, the stressors of life—the broken washing machine or the kids' grades—tax our ability to bounce back and may even distract us from nurturing our relationships. As

you'll read in "[Reserves of resilience](#)," it's important to keep those stressors in perspective. One way is to recognize the strengths each person has, and leverage those to cope. Another aspect of resilience is recognizing unplanned and unwelcome occurrences for what they are: intrusions that need to be managed.

To keep stress—and our relationships—in balance, it can help if we make it a practice to check in with loved ones and see how they're feeling. We can find out what they'd like to change or achieve, and help them realize these dreams. By listening and acknowledging the needs and desires of our partners, we can positively affect relationships.

We explore this topic in our special section on relationships. Keeping relationships strong—whether or not MS is in the picture—takes time and attention, as the couples in our story, "[When MS is the third wheel](#)," discuss. This is true, too, when intimacy and sexuality are concerns. Sexuality is part of being human, and like any aspect of a strong relationship, it deserves focused attention. We delve into this subject in "[Get closer](#)."

At the National MS Society, we strive to provide support, information and resources for all the facets of life with MS—even those that are most difficult to talk about. We aim to give people whatever tools and opportunities they need to broach subjects comfortably, and move their lives forward.

Positive, supportive relationships are important to everyone. They make us more resilient to the ups and downs, and help us live our best lives. People can learn more about resilience and tapping into their personal strengths with the Society's [Everyday Matters](#) program. The Peer Connection program and [MSconnection.org](#) offer additional options to connect with others and develop positive relationships.

I would love to hear from you about your experience with programs or resources that have helped you. Have you used one of our peer support programs? Have you searched for something on our websites and been able to find what you're looking for? What other kinds of resources would help you feel powerful, connected and supported? Drop me a line and let me know.

As always, I look forward to hearing from you.

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Let me know your thoughts. Email me at cyndi@nmss.org.