



My name is Amanda, I was diagnosed 5 years ago with Relapsing Remitting Multiple Sclerosis.

My MS symptoms consist of a painful numb right leg and numbness across my face with no feeling over my left eye and forehead. My abdomen feels like it's in cold water, my arms also have a strange feeling and I randomly loose grip of things due to my hands being slightly numb with no feeling in my fingertips.

This quite harshly impacts my life everyday, I am a wife, mum to 3 boys and work as a nail tech and beauty therapist. Some days I can

barely stand up right. For me, often the winter is harsher on my body; I use a cane during the winter to help me from falling. At work I often spill or drop things but I don't let it stop me doing it. It's hard to keep up with my kids some days too but I do my best, and have taught them the best I can, to get them to understand mum is ok I just fall more than other mums. I have also started at the gym which has helped in a huge way, I go and "do me" and love it, trying to keep the motto 'if you don't use it you lose it'.

Emotionally my MS is very draining, it's an illness that no one can see, I feel it is forgotten and people wonder why I'm struggling. It is hard some days to stay mentally positive and upbeat when the pain is worse and the simplest of life things become difficult. It's a fight in my own head most days to be ok and keep moving.

I get calls from Liz and Karen at MS Waikato to see how I'm doing and it enables me to talk about MS and my meds with someone other than the nurse or doctor. Nothing is too minor for me to ask, which makes me feel safe enough to talk. It's good to have someone who can give advice on the little things that worry me without having to wait to see the specialist. To have someone to talk to that gets where you are coming from.

We have attended MS camp twice now, it was amazing meeting other families in the same boat and having fun.

This isn't an illness that is going to go away, this is life now, there is no going back. It would be amazing if researchers discovered that one thing that would help us all return our bodies to how they were. Just think when you sit on your leg and it goes numb as you try to walk, and it's all strange until the feeling comes back, that's my leg now and has been for the past 5 years as it was the first thing to go.

If you're newly diagnosed, don't think of a wheel chair right away, like I did! It's all I really ever knew of MS. Try your best to think positively, don't let it change too many things in your life, adapt and carry on. Don't be afraid to ask to change your meds if the one the specialist puts you doesn't seem to be working. The first one I was given was wrong for me, I got worse and was foggy and not me! I changed and wow what a difference! No brain fog I

can hold a conversation and walk pretty normally for me again. Most importantly, don't ever let others tell you because you have MS you can't do things; you know you best you will learn the new body rules as you go. I've fallen down stairs, I've fallen up stairs I've even fallen standing still, but I'm still out there doing me, I even got the title of NZ Nail Technician of the year 2022 shaky hands and all.

Amanda

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