

RECLAIMING HOPE

by Valerie, Davenport, WA

HOPE - it's a small word we all use. "I hope I get this, I hope I get that." "I hope you don't mind me asking..." "I hope it quits raining." I've had hope and I've lost hope, too. My story is about hope: Hope for my children, my grandchildren, and for those of us who along the way misplaced our HOPE. I don't really remember the moment I lost hope—one day it was just gone. I hadn't planned on MS (not that anyone does) but when I was diagnosed with relapsing MS, it changed how I looked at everything.

I grew up believing if you worked hard, were kind, and put others first you would have a good life. Without warning, that changed

and I no longer trusted what I had grown-up to believe. I lost my faith and I had very little hope. Fortunately, that didn't last very long. I had a choice to make: I could sit back and wait to see what happened, or I could start treatment and fight. I chose to start treatment, but honestly, not because of any data or other facts—I was asked simply, "What do you have to lose?" And my answer was, "a lot."

Multiple sclerosis brought a lot of chaos and change into my life. It also taught me an important part of dealing with change and chaos is considering other possibilities to accomplish the things I set out to do. I've truly come to believe that always having an alternative plan is a great method for living

well with MS

Looking back, when I was first diagnosed one of the things I wanted most: I wanted to have hope. Finding a treatment that worked for me, and being supportive of others with relapsing MS also brought me back to myself again. For me, an important part of feeling good again—and finding hope—has been yoga. I pretty much fell in love with yoga right away, but learned to approach it with caution—like the time I went to a yoga seminar and discovered that it was being held at a nudist camp.

Today, I'm a certified yoga instructor and teach my own classes—in appropriate attire, of course. If you're interested in being more physi-

cally active, you should talk to your doctor about an exercise program that might work well for you. For me, yoga has been the right kind of exercise—and in more than one way. In addition to helping me stay physically active, it's also helped me to stop worrying about the future and focus more on the here and now. When you're living with MS it can be easy to dwell on the uncertainties of the future. Being able to live in the present and not worry so much about the things you can't control is really important. I also think it's important to be involved in the MS community. Since my diagnosis, I've become involved in my local National Multiple Sclero-

sis Society chapter, and with MSlifelines. I stay involved because I enjoy talking to people; I know how they feel. Being able to offer support to others is a huge deal to me because I know how vital a good support system can be, and how important it is to hold on to hope. I call my own supporters the Silent Supporters. They don't make any grand gestures, but they know me well and do small things—like taking me out for coffee or calling on a Saturday—at just the right time.

Life really is about adapting and having a back-up plan which doesn't mean you have to lose your dreams – they're still waiting for you. You may just have

to find a different path to achieving them. You really only regret the things you didn't do not the things you didn't try. Be centered – be present and go a little upside down once in a while. What do you have to lose?

<http://www.nation-almssociety.org>

www.mslifelines.com

<http://www.yogajournal.com/slideshow/5-yoga-poses-for-people-with-multiple-sclerosis/>



Valerie, "Reverse Warrior"



Valerie, "Lotus Pose"

yOGa

Saturdays 9am to 10am \$5
with your instructor Valerie!

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