

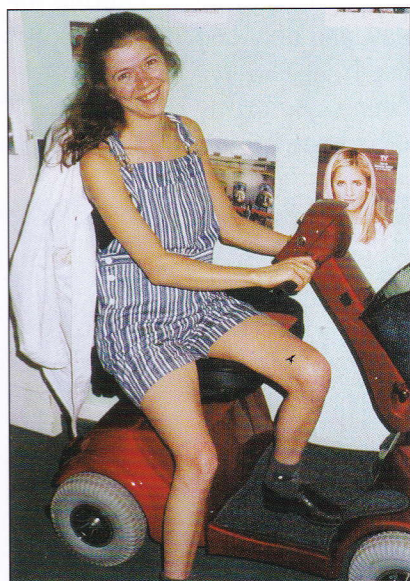
**Sylvia Brown, 27, from Sheffield, was diagnosed with MS in 1994 when she was 21. She has set up a group for young people with MS in Sheffield, and has her own website.**

**A**t first I was frightened. I didn't want to know about MS and just wanted to run away from it all.

My worst fears were that I would soon be in a wheelchair and that my life would be over. I tried my best to get on with it. But the MS was always lurking there, progressing, and whispering to me: 'You are living on borrowed time you know!'

I kept taking 'quick-fix' steroids to put me back onto my feet. They didn't fix anything, just bought me a little more time.

By 24 my mobility began to visibly deteriorate. I could no



# Reach

**"Everyone said I was really brave", says Sylvia Brown, who faced MS by jumping out of an aeroplane at 13,000 feet. "But to me, brave is getting up every morning and facing the world with MS."**

longer hide the MS, so I decided to tell the world by jumping out of an aeroplane at 13,000 ft!

My tandem skydive made front page news and raised £2,000 for MS charities. Everyone said I was really brave, but to me brave was getting up in the morning and facing the world with MS!

Looking back, I see my tandem skydive as a turning point. The response I got from the people of Sheffield gave me the hope and courage to fight on.

**I knew I had to take control of MS myself**

However, six months after my jump, I found myself wheelchair bound and in free-fall decline. It

was then that I knew I had to start taking control of MS myself.

I logged onto the internet and started keying in with people with MS from all over the world. It was wonderful, suddenly I was no longer alone! Immediately I started changing my life.

First, I went to see a good nutrition consultant. Together, we came up with a wheat-free, dairy-free, sugar-free dietary programme, together with supplements to try to stabilise my progressive condition. I felt like I had nothing to lose by trying and only my life to gain.

That was two years ago. Since then, there have been good times and bad times with the MS, but overall it has not



# for the Skies!

progressed at all. I am gaining in strength and can even walk short distances with just a stick. After a relapse I bounce back and recover naturally so although I still have MS I no longer live with fear.

My love life has come up trumps too. The skydive led me to find my Mr. Right. Well, Mr wRight actually. Through the skydive publicity I made friends with former pop-star from ABC, Stephen Singleton. He helped me get my life back on track by taking me swimming every week. And when I decided to buy a mobility scooter he introduced me to his uncle, Steve Wright, who

runs 'Fair Price Mobility'. This was the start of a beautiful romance.

Having found my own ways of living with MS I am now helping to set up GYMS (a Group for Young MSers) in Sheffield.

Our message is that you don't have to be a victim to MS. There really is so much you can do to help yourself. Do whatever it takes, and never give up!



**Website** If you want to know what's going on in MS and can't wait until the next issue of New Pathways, this site is good for current news: <http://www.btinternet.com/~mspages/mscowboy.html>

## Philosophies to get you by

Sylvia Brown's website is full of philosophies to help you live with MS. Here is one:

### Shake It Off and Step Up

A parable is told of a farmer who owned an old mule. The mule fell into the farmer's well. The farmer heard the mule braying, and after carefully assessing the situation, the farmer sympathised with the mule, but decided that neither the mule nor the well was worth the trouble of saving. Instead, he called his neighbours together and told them what had happened ...and enlisted them to help haul

dirt to bury the old mule in the well and put him out of his misery.

Initially, the old mule was hysterical! But as the farmer and his neighbours continued shovelling and the dirt hit his back ... a thought struck the mule. It suddenly dawned on him that every time a shovel load of dirt landed on his back he should...SHAKE IT OFF AND STEP UP! This he did, blow after blow. "Shake it off

and step up...shake it off and step up...shake it off and step up!" He repeated to encourage himself. No matter how painful the blows, or how distressing

the situation seemed, the old mule fought "panic" and just kept right on SHAKING IT OFF AND STEPPING UP!

It wasn't long before the old mule, battered and exhausted, STEPPED TRIUMPHANTLY OVER THE WALL OF THAT WELL! What seemed like it would bury him, actually blessed him...all because of the manner in which he handled his adversity.

THAT'S LIFE! If we face our problems and respond to them positively, and refuse to give in to panic, bitterness, or self-pity...THE ADVERSITIES THAT COME ALONG TO BURY US USUALLY HAVE WITHIN THEM THE POTENTIAL TO BENEFIT AND BLESS US!

Sylvie Brown's website is at [www.livingwithms.co.uk](http://www.livingwithms.co.uk).

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