

Henry Yorke, Bedlington,
Northumberland

MS IS More An Inconvenience Than Threat To Life

Dear New Pathways,
Having been through the mill with MS, I can honestly say I can well relate to both what Sam Long was saying in his article about stress, and also to readers' feelings that he was belittling their emotions of anger, grief and loss.

Sam Long was right in that we do imagine our worst fears and the stress of doing this makes you feel far worse. But when life as we know it falls to pieces it is "devastating". I know because I have been there, having to give up work, and feeling empty, lost and depressed.

I am now 29 and have come a long way with the illness. At first it did feel like the end of the world, but over the years I have discovered that I can help myself to manage MS, which has led to a gradual change in my attitude. No longer am I running away or in denial, and MS doesn't scare me any more. So now, MS IS more of an "inconvenience" than a threat to my life.

However having lived through the experience of MS in "free-fall" decline, I also regard myself as very lucky not to live any longer in that reality. I also feel empowered as I know that it was little me who changed my prognosis and my life. That has been a huge learning curve.

For some people it takes longer than others to come to terms with MS and learn how best to live with it. You can't rush people through this process. Let them feel sad, angry, and lost for however long they need to.

Once we have done this it is all too easy to forget this process we have been through and judge others and label them as negative, without giving them a chance to come to terms with all the "big", "scary" and "horrible" changes they are experiences in their lives.

Looking back from where I stand now, I have to take responsibility for not only a lot of

my stress, but also a lot of my distress. I handled MS badly and could have "got real" and "got informed" sooner.

However it's no good looking back with regret and blaming myself. What has happened has happened. The main reason why I was unaware back then about how to best live with and manage MS is because NO ONE told me! Now thankfully we have *New Pathways* and the Internet to speed us up on this journey of discovering ways to help ourselves.

Sylvia Brown, Sheffield
sylvia.m.brown@btinternet.com

DLA Appeal 'Sheer Hell'

Dear New Pathways,
Thank you for a fantastic magazine.

I would also like to thank you for directing readers to the BHAS website which contains guidance on completion of the horrendous DLA claim form.

I initially applied for DLA last March but was turned down. When I asked for an explanation I was told that I 'wasn't ill enough.' The officer seemed to think that although I was poorly during a relapse, everything returned to 100% during remission.

Frustrated, I appealed. On the appeal papers the adjudication officer had actually written that as I worked full time and drove, it was improbable that I couldn't walk very far without severe discomfort.

I was lucky enough to have Welfare Rights with me during my appeal hearing, which turned out to be 45 minutes of sheer hell. I was asked the same questions over and over again, but stuck to my guns and was awarded higher rate mobility and lower rate care for a year. My case must then be reviewed.

Even though I work for the Department of Work and Pensions, I was terrified at the prospect of completing another form and going through the whole process again. The letter issued with the blank form puts the fear of God into you.

Eventually, I took a couple of days off work, printed the guidance from BHAS from the

internet, and followed it word for word. Those days were obviously well spent as I have now been awarded DLA for life! I can now get my automatic car.

Yours faithfully,
Jill Cowan, Co. Durham

The BHAS is the Barton Hill Advice Centre in Bristol. We featured it in the September/October 2002 issue of *New Pathways* on the Rights & Benefits page.

Their website is:
www.bhas.org.uk
Email: info@bhas.org.uk

Touched By Short Story

Dear New Pathways,
I felt compelled to write, as I was very touched by Mrs Gregory's short story in the Jan/Feb issue.



My partner has MS and can walk only a few yards, but has kept mobile by using a Motability scooter. It has been a godsend for my partner as it enables him to take our dog for walks around our village and join us on walks and trips. Otherwise he would be housebound.

Yours sincerely,
Miss S. Beshizza, Exeter, Devon
S.M.Beschizza@exeter.ac.uk

Great Smokies Labs

Dear New Pathways,
In the September/October edition of *New Pathways*, the UK company linked to Great Smokies Diagnostic Laboratory in Asheville, North Carolina, USA, was listed on page 42. However, no contact details were given. I am considering having a test for leaky gut and know that this laboratory offers the test.

Thank you,
C. Croxford, CROX888@aol.com

*The company you are looking for is: Health Interlink, Interlink House,
Unit B, Asfordby Business Park,
Melton Mowbray, Leics. LE14 3JL
Tel: 01664-810011*