

"You feel such love, but you have your limits and cannot always cope."

Having A Baby When You've Got MS Is Tough – But How We Love Our Beautiful, Fun Little Boy!

By Sylvia Brown

Sylvia Brown was told it was too risky to have a baby as she had an abnormal womb as well as progressive MS. Now she's the proud mum of baby Marcus.

Seven years ago, when my MS was progressing rapidly, I never thought I'd make it to 30, never mind make it to 32 and become a mum!

When my pregnancy test came back positive I was horrified. A scan the following week revealed that I was 8 weeks pregnant! Although I was terrified I knew I had to go ahead with the pregnancy. There was a new life inside me, a part of myself and Steve, and he deserved a chance.

No one knew whether my half-womb would carry the baby long enough to survive, but the consultant told me that if I got to 32 weeks, the baby would be fine.

Would the baby make it? Would the baby be okay? Would my relationship with Steve survive? I went to every scan with trepidation, only to be told that the pregnancy was progressing fine but with my half-sized womb and MS, I often wondered whether I was being courageous or plain foolish going through with this pregnancy.

Throughout the pregnancy my MS had been a bit better. MS often goes into remission during pregnancy. But towards the end of my pregnancy my bladder went from bad (which it always



The little man himself

is) to appalling – the baby was pressing on it and kicking it like a football.

At 32 weeks, I heaved a huge sigh of relief. At 35.5 weeks I was booked in for a caesarean section, as the baby was breech.

The Day Hurricane Marcus Hit

Marcus was born at 36 weeks last October by caesarean section. He was a good 5lbs 11oz, and didn't need any special care! I describe his birth day as the day hurricane Marcus hit.

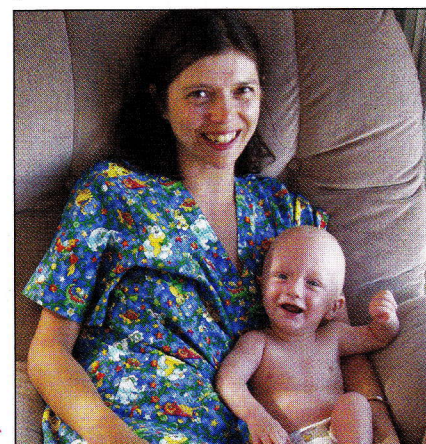
Having a caesarean was a surreal experience and pretty traumatic. I felt shaky and sick while they pulled a tiny new person out of my tummy, but was reassured that was all quite normal. Marcus was healthy, thank God.

I spent a week in hospital but got precious little sleep, as I was determinedly breast-feeding and Marcus knew it was best to stimulate breast-milk at night.

What The Hell Have I Done?

The fourth morning after his birth, I was in floods of tears, thinking what the hell have I done? Marcus was sleeping like a cherub beside me, blissfully unaware of the night of hell he'd just put me through. I was almost hallucinating from sleep deprivation and had the baby blues.

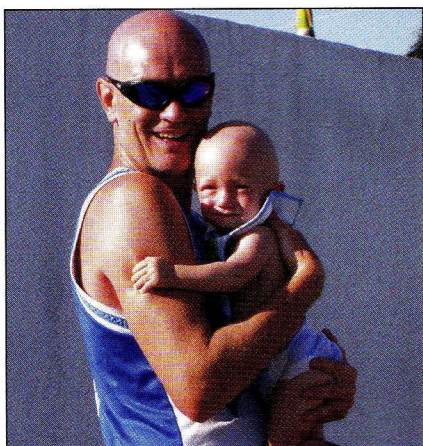
A psychologist told me the main problem was that I was outside my 'comfort zones' in the way I managed my MS (rest, sleep, avoidance of stress, diet etc.). How true. I had a tiny person to care for now and



Marcus and Mum, Sylvia

could not care for myself in the way I had been before.

I came home and Steve and I just got on with the job. We did shifts at night, which worked well; each of us getting some decent kip. Six or seven hours felt like luxury to me, even though I really need more!



Dad, Steve, with Marcus

In the first couple of months after Marcus was born Steve and I had a few explosive rows, mostly because I was not coping. Steve was under enormous pressure running the business, caring for Marcus, being a house-husband, caring for me as well, and sometimes it took its toll. Often I wondered if our relationship would survive.

Sometimes I just went into the bedroom and howled because of what I'd done to my life. It was mad. I felt as though I'd been catapulted into an alternate universe and it wasn't a nice one! I felt as though my pain didn't matter anymore. Marcus's needs had to come first as he was a newborn. But I was the one really suffering.

Push Yourself At Your Peril!

After two months of this life, I became very run down and my MS got worse. I was ill, immobile and my legs kept shooting out in front of me in spasm.

I was very scared. I had

worked so hard to reclaim some mobility and my independence and now my whole life as I knew it was under threat. I was verging on needing a higher level of care and I was not going to give in to this lightly.

It is so typical to relapse after having a baby, I was annoyed that I'd ended up following this trend. But I think it is remarkable that I managed to do so much.

Around this time Marcus stopped taking both breast and bottle at night and I slept and slept like there was no tomorrow.

Motherhood's OK As A Day Job!

Life went on and I started to recover and enjoy being a mum. As a day job I could handle it! I had managed two months of breast-feeding, but now it was time to look after myself.

At around 2 months Marcus started to smile and express his lovely little personality. We were both helplessly smitten with our beautiful, bright, healthy, fun little boy!

As he grows he looks more and more like his dad, and has his sense of humour too.

When Marcus was five months, we went to our place in the Florida Keys. Marcus loved it; he was out and about, swimming, with lots of people to smile at. The sunshine and swimming did me a lot of good as well!

But when we got back, the job of caring for Marcus fell on my shoulders as Steve had to run the business. By now, Marcus was getting too heavy for me to lift, was demanding more and sleeping a lot less during the day (but better at night).

He could roll about and was verging on crawling. The job had

become too much for me. I ended up exhausted and worse in my legs again.

So we made the decision to send him to a nursery part time. It's close by, and it all feels just right. Marcus thinks it's baby heaven there, so it is proving good for both of us. When he's there, I work, rest, go swimming etc. and generally look after myself.

There are so many joys in having a baby. He's so precious; we are very lucky and blessed. He's a real charmer, especially with the ladies. We have so many laughs and precious moments with him and it's wonderful the way he's bonded so well with his dad!

But there's a lot that's very tough and pretty horrible in having a baby too, and with MS it's at least ten times harder.

You love your baby but you don't always like him or her! The extremes of emotion you feel about your precious little bundle have to be experienced to be understood! You feel such love and just want to protect them but you have limits and cannot always cope. Part of you just craves your old life back.

There are many times that I have wished Marcus hadn't come along, but I don't regret his existence. We could not have wished for a cuter and lovelier-natured baby boy.



Just splashing around!