



2013 HS Scholarship Winner

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My Life with CFS

I am 17 years old and I have been living with CFS for almost half my life. I fell ill at 10 years old, just a month after starting a new school. Unfortunately for me, due to the bad advice of a doctor, I was told there was nothing that could be done to help me, and I spent the next three years sick and losing hope.

However, at 13 thanks to the perseverance of my amazing parents, I started going to the amazing Dr. Derek Enlander. Dr. Enlander never once told me that there was nothing that could be done for me. He started making suggestions and making a protocol for me the first day I came in to see him. I sincerely believe that if I hadn't started seeing Dr. Enlander I would have ended up having to be home schooled for high school.

I'm not going to lie, having CFS stinks. Throughout the years, I admit I have indulged in self-pity far too often. Having this disease has affected not only my physical health, but also other aspects of my life such as my school

performance and my social life. My physical symptoms of CFS - like exhaustion, achiness, and headaches - caused me to miss many days of school. After missing school, I would come back having to catch up on a lot of work, which certainly didn't make trying to recover from relapses any easier. As far as my social life goes, CFS made a devastating impact on it. I have not been physically able to hang out with friends that often, this has even caused some friendships to end. I am aware of the fact that I am not like my peers, I am known among them as 'the weird, shy, sick girl.'

I would however be remiss to not point out that having CFS has given me a more of a well-rounded perspective. I am aware that people, whose lives look perfect, are often struggling with their own demons. I am well aware of how lucky I am; I could have it much worse. I am blessed to have a support network of close friends, family and the whole office at Dr. Enlander, who go above and beyond in caring for their patients. I could not even imagine facing this disease without my support network, and luckily, I never will have to.

In some ways I am luckier than my 'healthy' peers, because living with CFS has helped me appreciate my good days, and to not do anything stupid that will risk those good days. I will never partake in drug use, smoking, drinking or any other form of substance abuse. I have come too far from where I was seven years ago to risk causing a relapse just to get a chemically induced high. Additionally, unlike my peers, I do not yearn to be popular. I only have a limited amount of energy to spend; I believe that it should be spent with people who truly care about me. I can count the number of true friends I have on one hand, which is fine by me. These friends are the people who have seen me at my worst and not turned their backs on me.