

### 3. You Need An Advisory Committee

Think support system on steroids. We have well meaning people in our lives who are ready to support us when we need it. So put them on the clock. We can have a blind spot when the subject matter is close to our hearts (our health and wellbeing is definitely on that list).

The purpose of your advisory committee is to help cover all angles that you may not see. Each person has a different role; Someone for medical support, someone for social support, someone for love. Someone to tell you if they notice a change with you (better or worse). Someone to talk you off the ledge (I may have used this a few times). These are all very important roles.

My committee right now has my MS Specialist and physician's assistant for medical support. My parents, sister and husband for reality checks and to tell me if something seems different about me. My friends for humor and distraction. I also have a life coach, psychologist and other healers that give me valuable perspective. Everyone on my committee is signed up for support and love.

Your committee may change over time. When I was diagnosed, I wasn't married and didn't have a boyfriend. And unfortunately a few of my friends weren't very supportive when the subject turned from partying to "crap you never thought would happen to you". That's ok. You may find some people aren't as supportive as you thought they would be. Don't try to change them, just take them off the committee. Over time your relationships will change and your committee will get stronger.

Who's on your Advisory Committee? Ideally, start with this basic structure:

**Medical Support** (I strongly suggest an MS Specialist, nurses, social workers.)

**Social Support** (Family and friends you know are compassionate and loyal.)

**Love** (This does not have to be romantic love. Just a deep connection with family or a friend.)

**Observation Duty** (This doesn't have to be creepy. Just someone you trust to not drop the ball and tell you, lovingly, that they see a change.)

**Reality Check Duty** (MS or not, Reality Checks are always necessary.)

The people in these roles may change. Notice who's helpful and who isn't and tweak your committee as necessary. This is for you - so optimize it.

The most important thing to remember- tell participants they're on the committee. Don't assume they know. Make sure they understand their role and are ok with it. All of these spots should be filled with willing participants who are informed and that you love and trust.

## 4. You Can Live A Normal Life And Have MS

You feel like the game of life just delivered a surprise left hook. You may feel like everyone is looking at you differently and they just *know*.

You just want to be “normal” again.

I have good news. You can be normal and have MS.

The two are not mutually exclusive. Nor do you need to have zero symptoms for that to be true.

I have clients with visible disabilities that have a completely normal life. I have clients with no visible symptoms (or even no symptoms at all) who come to me feeling like they aren't normal and everyone knows.

Your symptoms - or lack thereof - don't decide if you have a normal life.

You do.

One of the biggest moments in my life happened when I realized that none of the situations in our lives get to decide how we feel. What we *think* about situations determines how we feel.

If a stranger walks up to you and gives you \$500 in cash- what would you think?

How would you feel?

What if that same stranger hands \$500 to an 80 year old woman? What do you think she would think and feel?

What if that same stranger hands \$500 to a 5 year old girl? What would she think and feel?

The 80 year old may think it's really strange and feel suspicious.

You may think it's a fabulous and feel loved.

The 5 year old may think it's stranger-danger and feel afraid.

If the stranger with the \$500 was what caused you to feel something, everyone here would feel the same way. But they don't.

The difference here is what they *think* about the stranger with \$500. Each person thinks something different. That's what causes the suspicion, the love and the fear.

MS is no different. MS doesn't make you feel worried or scared or grateful.

You do because of what you think about your MS.

When I learned this, I felt like I struck gold. I'm the one who decides if I feel normal. Not the MS. Not the symptoms. Me.