

Through Another's Eyes

Dear Family and Friends,

As you are already aware, I have been diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. At the very second those words passed from the doctor's mouth, I began a life-long battle against a demon that lives within me, my own Central Nervous System. This battle is fought by many, but understood by few. Even to myself and others who are afflicted with this disease, we understand relatively little of what is happening to us, despite our search for answers, our pursuit of a cure and our constant frustration at our own body's lack of cooperation.

Were I to explain it to you, I would have to ask you to release all your preconceived notions of who I was, in order for you to accept who I am. I am the same person that you have known all along, but the rules have been changed, the game must be played on a different field now. I have the same dreams, the same hopes, the same mind-set, the same affections, the same aspirations that I have always had. I must approach them from a different angle, but that is okay. It is something that I must deal with, inside myself, for myself. This is the way that I must do it, because each day the playbook changes, the conditions are different and the struggle is modified.

You are not alone in your confusion. Besides myself and my fellow travelers on this road, our doctors, nurses, researchers, pharmacists, therapists and an army of others do not totally understand. The best minds in the medical world strive with these questions every day, yet they fall short of the elusive answer.

At this point in time, there is no cure. The cure does not lie in the medications that I take, does not reside in a simple pill, does not live in the halls of medicine. It lives somewhere just outside the reach of minds devoted to the search. It will not come easily, for there are as many permutations of the disease as there are those who have it. But, we do have the faith, hope and determination to find it.

I do not ask you to comprehend this disease, but I do ask you to understand me and believe in me. For many of us, we have lost our spouses, our friends, loved ones and acquaintances to this malady, in addition to that which the disease takes from us. Multiple Sclerosis takes from each of us, without regard to who, what or when. We, those of us united by this condition, do not know where the path will take us or when it will take us there. We cannot just get over it, we cannot ignore it and go on, we cannot just shake it off. Were it that easy, we would. We wish it was.

If, however, you choose to not grasp the reality that I am forced to live in, then let us part ways amicably. I know that it takes strength, character and resolve to be a part of a relationship, at any level, with someone who has a chronic illness. If our paths must divide, then I wish you well and pray that you will do likewise. I will continue on this path set out for me, relentless in my determination to fight the good fight, stronger for having known you and resolved that one day I will rise above these challenges that lie in wait for me.

Written by Bob for Linda