Speech Therapy

December 29, 2016 By Nicole Lemelle

“What you do today can improve all your tomorrows.” ~ Ralph Marston

Years of developing lesions on my brain have caused changes in my speech. Consequently, I am having difficulty with oral communication and being understood. My voice is weak and I slur my words. And at times I stutter. I also have something called “scanning speech”. This is when my normal speech pattern is disrupted and separated by a noticeable pause, unclear articulation of words, and problems controlling loudness.

My most frustrating time is when I try to express my thoughts. I just can’t think of the words I want to say. Finishing one statement sometimes leaves me completely breathless. And when I finally piece a sentence together, most people have no idea what I’m talking about. They tend to look at my husband and ask him, “What is she saying?”

This lack in communication skills causes me to be excluded from common social interactions. And I just hate it. It makes me feel dumb, left out and lonely.

So after being blistered by the reality of losing yet another ability, I decided to get professional help and enroll in speech therapy. Unfortunately, my insurance only pays for one form of rehabilitation at a time. As a result, I had to postpone physical therapy in order to get help for my communication problems. And even though I love physical therapy, I have replaced it with 20 sessions of speech therapy.

Morgan, my speech/language pathologist, quickly noticed my problems on the first day of clinic. After initial consultation, she went on to create a treatment tailored to my specific MS symptoms and weaknesses.

The first exercise she showed me was called base of tongue movements. This helps enhance tongue control and strength, in order to better propel food and liquid.

The second one was called pitch glides. This drill improves upward movement of the larynx.

Lastly she formed an imminent plan for me to continue learning various oral exercises and voice training techniques.

This speech problem is just more proof that living with MS can sometimes be ugly. But despite my dilemma, I still hold my head up. And I've learned you can't just believe everything will get better.

Waiting for the stars to align is not an answer to your problems. You have to actually accomplish objectives to improve your situation.

So that's what I'm doing. I'm getting help.

And my New Year's resolution is to do something to make my life better. I just wish I had started this type of therapy when I first noticed I was having difficulties with my speech. But I guess it's better late than never.

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