Stealing Who We Once Were

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"When we are no longer able to change a situation – we are challenged to change ourselves." ~ Viktor E. Frankl

Everyone can look back 5 years and say wow I was so different then. We can all remember the things we did years ago that we are not able to do now. We also recognize the loss of abilities that come with the passing of time. Yes, we all become different people over time but my progression seems to be more in months than years. It's like my life is always evolving into something new. One day I can accomplish a certain task. Then only one day later, the same chore is impossible for me to complete. Subsequently in a few weeks, I'm able to carry out the assignment again but not at the same level or intensity.

MS has stolen so much from me that I could probably name fifty aspects of my life it has touched. I guess the top things are my job, my ability to walk, my driving privileges and my independence.

As people with MS, we sometimes face immense hardships due to our physical disabilities and have to overcome social stigmas that surround the disease. Whether it is true or all in my mind, I feel that pressure every time I mingle with the general public. I usually get sympathetic smiles and nervous sounding hellos. But I also get dirty looks that I interpret as "She looks fine to me, why does she need that scooter"?

Another major obstacle is trying to integrate with "normal" society. Most events and venues do not cater to people with MS, which makes assimilation discouraging and sometimes impossible. When interaction is achieved, usually one of the first questions most commonly asked is, "So what do you do for a living?" The majority response is an answer that explains what you do to be a productive member of society. In the eyes of most people that means having a job. Many with MS have been stripped of their life long answer to that question. While in the past we could have proudly said I am a teacher, a lawyer or a waitress. Now we must deal with the fact that we are on disability or only able to work a part-time job. This lost can make conversations uncomfortable. For me, I usually promptly respond by saying, "I am retired". Then I try to move to another subject.

I think the priority for most people with MS is striving for the best quality of life we can get. After all, multiple sclerosis does not kill us. For the most part, it is annoying and a huge inconvenience that sometimes causes problems. But unchecked, it can become a larger problem.

I acknowledge multiple sclerosis in moderation and I try my best to not let it run my life. Yet it continues to humble me and shape my world. And despite your chosen resolution, MS still has the ability to recreate a person by robbing them of their outside roles and independence. Which most times amount to their identity. I guess you can say MS is a thief. Or better yet an identity thief. Stealing who we once were.