

PATIENT'S PERSPECTIVE THE POWER OF POSITIVITY

By Lauren Bombardier



Living with CF at age 18, it's easy to get discouraged. What teenager wouldn't? It's not easy to take time out of a "normal" life to keep your self healthy. But with optimism, it is. My mother has always taught me that being compliant will only keep me healthy. This is easier said than done, but she also taught me that looking on the bright side makes everything a lot more bearable. When I wake up in the morning, it's easy to press snooze and skip my

treatments. But it's even easier to hop out of bed and start my

nebs when I look on the bright side and say, "This could mean one less visit to the hospital." How do I motivate myself? First, I find a song that inspires me, and when I find myself listening to the devil on my shoulder, I put it on. Right now that song is "Stand" by Rascal Flatts. Then, I make sure to laugh every single day. I sing while doing my Vest and sound like a shaking chipmunk. I laugh with my friends until my belly hurts. I do silly dances in the kitchen until I have myself in stitches over my crazy dance moves. Laughter releases so many happy endorphins that it's hard to be discouraged when it comes to CF. Finally, I stay positive by making it a daily mission to prove to CF that I'm better than it. I am able to run two miles every day because I believe I'm stronger than CF, I am able to take the stairs instead of the elevator because CF isn't going to stop me, and I do my homework, even when I'm sick, because CF isn't going to take away any opportunities. When I tell myself I CAN do something despite CF, when I know I have control of it instead of it having control of me, I am able to stay enthusiastic about being compliant. I am able to smile, and laugh, and enjoy my life with CF because I am an optimist. So next time you, or your child, decides to let CF take control, put on a happy song, find a way to laugh, and stand up to the CF bully and tell it you're better than any obstacle it tries to present. As Rascal Flatts sings, "Wipe your hands, shake it off, and Stand."

I was in the hospital for my first day of first grade. This hospital admission, the first of over a dozen, was to treat my lungs for Cystic Fibrosis (CF), a hereditary disease in which the lungs and pancreas produce thick, sticky mucus which chronically becomes infected and leads to organ damage. I spent my days in an unfamiliar room being poked and prodded by doctors while my peers learned to read and write. After two weeks, when I was finally released from the hospital, my mom bought me a new plaid skirt, shiny black shoes, and a new backpack. She hid her tears behind her camera as she took pictures of me getting on the bus for my first day of elementary school. Although I had missed out on the first day of school experience, Mom made this day a special one and would continue to make problems I encountered with my disease positive learning experiences as I grew up. With Cystic Fibrosis comes a lot of responsibility. As a child, I was required to do a nebulizer every day to fight infection in my lungs as well as to take a variety of pills; including three with every meal I ate to help me digest my food. As a stubborn newly-diagnosed three year old I would cry and run away when Mom told me it was treatment time or when she tried to get me to take my pills. She maintained that she was only doing it because she loved me, while in my childhood innocence I didn't realize that this disease was affecting her even more than it was affecting me. I was not aware at the time that she was faced

with the knowledge that there was no cure for CF and that it would only get worse with time, so she took the initiative to keep me as healthy as possible. As I grew up, the amount of pills I took a day went from ten to almost forty while I had to do four nebulizers a day instead of one. Mom took a hands-off approach and allowed me to take charge of doing the treatments and taking my pills every day. As a result, in high school, I began to take care of myself without her telling me to, by waking up early to do my nebulizers, sorting my pills every day, and getting make up homework when I knew I would be at the doctor. I also began taking responsibility outside of having CF. I did all my homework, made mature decisions and came home at the right time, and managed work, sports, and clubs around my time set aside to take care of myself. Without her entrusting this responsibility in me at an early age, I would not have turned out to be such a responsible high school student. Mom has also made Cystic Fibrosis a lesson in living life. Since CF puts a damper on my life at times, Mom teaches me not to get down about it but to enjoy and appreciate every moment instead, whether it's a sunny day on the beach, time with friends, or something to giggle about. She is always telling me to dance like no one's watching both figuratively, to live life without a care, and literally when we dance down the aisles at the super market. With the positive attitude she has instilled in me, I am able to make my problems tolerable:

such as difficult classes, a tough field hockey game, or a two week set back in the hospital. Mom shows me how important it is to have someone to love you and care for you through hard times. Through her infinite love and care, I have learned to be that someone for my friends and family, helping them to see the bright side of things and being there for them when they are going through a tough time. Mom is the light shining through me every day. I would not be the happy, lighthearted person I am without her. I can say with confidence that I am prepared for college because of my mother. Although I grew up with a challenge most children don't usually face, Mom made it something that would teach me valuable lessons in life. On my first day of college, Mom may cry like she did when I got on the bus with my shiny new shoes and plaid skirt, but I hope she will know that she has molded me into a mature young woman who is ready to face the world.

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