



**National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society**

Turning Adversity into Opportunity

We've all come across an adverse situation in our lives before. Whether you just lost a job or struggle with a personal relationship, these trying times put us to the test to see if we'll rise or fall. For me, my adverse situation was when I was diagnosed with secondary-progressive MS in 2008.

After my diagnosis, I realized that when you're faced with an adverse situation, there are three ways to look at it: a problem, a challenge or an opportunity.

A problem is something that festers—it negatively affects your life. A challenge is a struggle that you must overcome. Now, looking at those two options, it would seem there's nothing but gloom and doom when you're faced with a troubling news. But there is another way to look at it.

You can choose to see adverse situations as an opportunity. An opportunity doesn't negatively impact your life, nor does it feel like a struggle. It's a way of looking at something and seeing the positive that can come from it.

At the time of my diagnosis, I had a booming career in public relations (PR). I had a beautiful home life with a wife and two young daughters. I felt on top of the world.

When I got the news that I had MS, a part of me was relieved that my persisting, undiagnosed symptoms could finally be managed somehow. But I also felt scared. At the time, there were no disease-modifying therapies on the market for progressive MS, and I didn't know what my future would look like.

It was when I had an exacerbation that landed me in a rehabilitation institute that I first started to see my situation as an opportunity to still achieve great things.

A nursing aid was bringing me back from physical therapy. I had one leg hanging in the air when my phone rang. It was a tech company in California. With one leg in the air, and another on the ground, I closed \$180,000 worth of business.

There I was, in an adverse situation—in a rehab institute because of my MS, and yet, I had just scored a monumental victory for my company. I began to shift my perspective and attitude to realize that I still had opportunities to move forward. I have my education, brains, reputation and experience to propel me forward.

Doing PR for high-tech companies, I used to go to big trade shows and would walk around to meet with clients and get new business. But because of my MS, I could no longer walk around the shows.

But does this mean the door to my career is now closed? Absolutely not. I found other ways to network—social media, computer and phone. I began to explore other careers—I started my own motivational speaking business and began to teach more in higher education.

Even though MS may put a temporary hold on your life, you must move forward and find opportunities to live your best life with MS. There are plenty of resources online to connect you with vocational agencies. Talk with others living with MS.

MS is only a problem if you let it stay a problem. Take the first step. Have hope that a cure is possible. Perseverance in the face of adversity to show that your life can continue despite MS.

Turning your adverse situation into an opportunity is your chance to go forth and make your life better.

About the writer:



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