

# Teens Speak Out

## See What's Inside

- *Photographs: How to Capture What You See*
- *Nothing But Success*
- *A Blessing in Disguise*
- *Is MS Different for a Teenager?*

**ENTER OUR BIG**

**"My Life" Photography Contest** (see inside)

*teen*

# *insideMS*



# “My Life” Photography Contest

Capture your life: your parents, siblings, friends, important adults in your life, yourself, pets, treasured things, favorite places. Self-portraits, dreams, action shots, scenery—all are welcome. Color or Black & White. Send a print, any size, of your best shot, along with your age, name, and address. One entry per person. Mail, by April 30, 2005, to: Editor, Teen InsideMS, National MS Society, 733 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017. (No entries will be returned. If you win, your parent will be asked to sign a Media Release.)

Contest is open to all teens 13-19 whose life is touched in some way by MS. One grand prize winner for the best photograph and 10 runner-ups. Grand prize is a \$100 gift card to Best Buy. Runner-up prize is a \$25 gift card to Best Buy. All winners will be showcased on our National Web site. Entries will be judged by 3 photographers/artists.



## PHOTOGRAPHS: HOW TO CAPTURE WHAT YOU SEE

*by David Godlis, professional photographer*

### Photographs are everywhere.

They are about what you see. They are about where you go. They are about your life, and they are about how you see life around you. When you take a picture you are essentially pointing your finger at something and telling people, “Look at what I see.” Or perhaps you took the picture for yourself to remember what you saw.

### What? Where? When?

There are photographs in the things that you pass everyday on the street. They are in your mirror. They are right in front of you when you're having your morning juice. They are what you look at while talking on your cell phone. You pass them while driving, or looking out the window on a train ride. They pass right by while you're waiting for the light to change on walking home from work. Everything that has light on it is photographable, and your point of view will literally determine the way **your** photograph looks. You saw something on this day at this time in this way.

### Same place, different views.

I am someone who quite often photographs his own life—I go places that interest me and take pictures there. But you and I can go to the same place and what you see will be different from what I see. You will see it one way and I will see it another. I may be tall looking down. You may be short looking up. I may notice someone's hair. You may notice their shoes. I may see humor and you may see sadness.

## Some tips

- **Think about what you want to photograph.** Do you want to photograph yourself (self-portraits) or the interesting things in your life (still-life's). How about your family and friends (portraiture or candid). Photographs can be about what you see, but they can also be about things you imagine (using costumes or props, for example).
- **Take a walk around your neighborhood or to your favorite place.** What buildings interest you? What objects interest you? What are other people doing that interests you? Try to look for looking's sake.
- **What does your eye find interesting?** Think about how a baby or a two year old is constantly looking around with fascination. The hard part will be pairing the technical ability to work the camera with the innocence of pure vision.

## Some technical tips

- **A photograph is not only about how you see things, but also about how your camera sees things.** There are rules of physics at play here. The world you see is 3-dimensional, but the camera will translate that to a 2-dimensional picture.
- **Concentrate on what you see through the camera viewfinder.** If you use a digital camera, be aware of the frame created by the LCD.
- **Only what is in that frame will be in your picture.** Learn to concentrate on what is in that frame when you press the shutter.
- **One rule of thumb—if the picture isn't good enough, you probably weren't close enough.** We always think we're closer to our subjects than we actually are.

## Light is the key

The corner of 23rd and Lexington may look good to you today, but when you come back tomorrow it doesn't look the same. The key is in the lighting. **A photograph is all about how a camera sees light landing on an object**, whether it be sunlight, room light, or studio lights. The corner of 23rd & Lex will look completely different in the morning light than it does at high noon or in the evening. Try to concentrate not just on what's in the picture, but on how the light lands on what's in the picture. Make sidelighting, backlighting, and shadows work to your advantage.

The hardest part will be picking your best shot. Look hard at what you have. Show your photos to others and get their opinions. Pick the photo that works best—not the one you want to work best. And don't let all this mumbo-jumbo confuse you. Get it all out of your head before you start shooting. Trust your own eyes. Enjoy yourself. Taking pictures shouldn't be hard work.

*David Godlis has been living with MS since 1984. To see some of his award winning photos, go to [www.godlis.com](http://www.godlis.com).*



# Nothing but success

by Sanese Kania White



Three years ago, my mother was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. I was devastated because I thought it would be fatal. After learning it could be controlled with medication, I was relieved. I started to become more knowledgeable about MS by asking my mother daily questions about her symptoms and feelings, watching her take her injections once a week, and reading more about it in MS publications and on the Internet.

This has inspired me to want a career in the medical field. Possibly I can conduct research to find a cure and help other mothers who are combating MS and other serious disorders. Whether researching a cure for MS or caring for patients and helping them understand their condition and what they can do to stay healthy, the field of medicine will give me an opportunity to use the compassionate qualities my mother has helped me to develop.

The major concern I have is the possibility of my mother's MS becoming worse. Knowing that she might one day be in a wheelchair and not be able to perform simple everyday tasks hurts me deeply. I have become more helpful. I try to do anything I possibly can to make things easier for her. When I observe her trying to go up flights of stairs, I make it my obligation to stop her and ask if I can get whatever she needs. Sometimes, I assist when she takes her injections. She designates me to record the date, time, and area of the injection on her weekly chart. It is my responsibility as a daughter to support her because knowing that she feels good makes me feel the same way. When she is feeling well, we try to spend time together.

My mother is a true role-model and inspiration to me. She copes with the frustrating symptoms of MS and continues to work full-time and take care of her family. Down-to-earth, devoted, hard-working, and intellectual are but a few of my mother's qualities that have significantly influenced my character.

When I ask my mother what I can do to make her feel better, she always replies that continuing to excel academically and graduating in the top of my class is everything in the world to her. As a result, her encouragement helped me develop my key motto: "Strive for nothing but success."



# A blessing in disguise

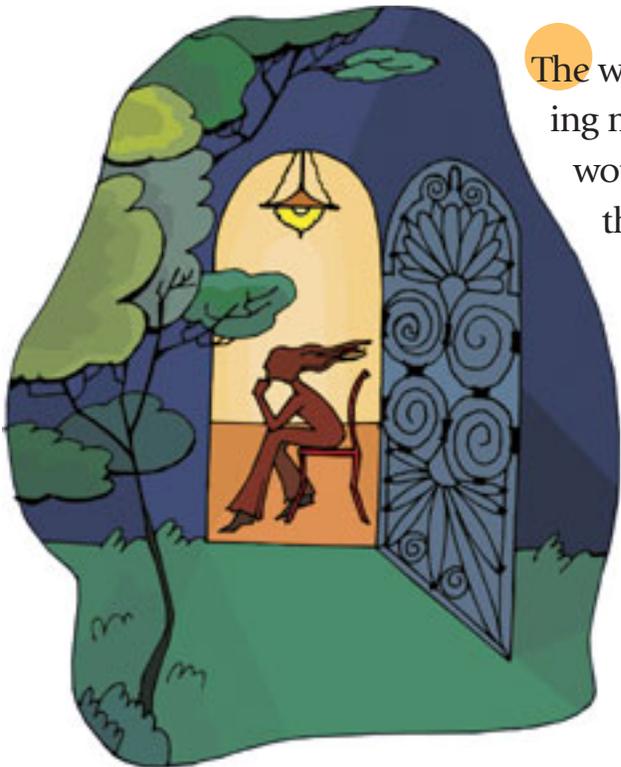
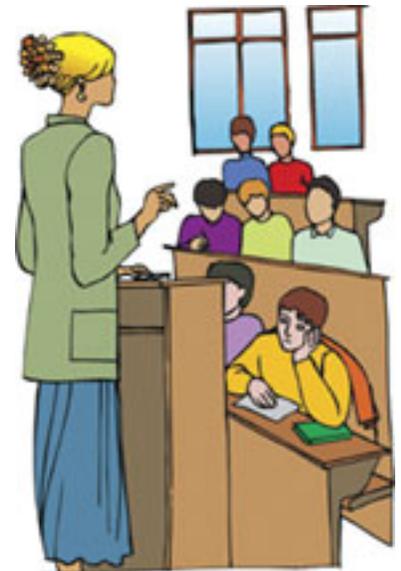
by Jessica Burge



They say from every bad situation comes a good thing: I am living proof of that statement. Growing up, I always had everything handed to me, not exactly on a silver platter, but nonetheless, still handed to me. I relied on others, especially my parents, to do everything for me.

Then I began my senior year of high school, my last year of being a child. I started to get nervous about the future that I would soon be facing alone. I didn't know how I would feel being on my own. Most of all, I wasn't sure how I would handle being away from my parents.

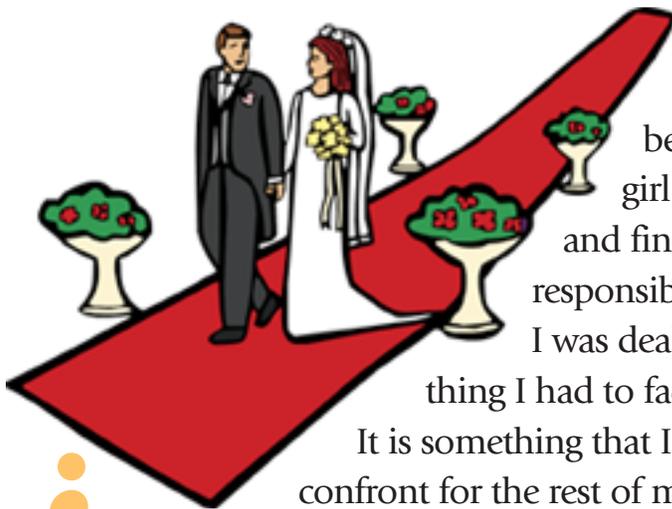
Then something happened that made me forget my fears. Actually, it made me forget every fear except fear for my life. For several days I had been having double vision, which was getting continuously worse. I went to an eye doctor who sent me for an MRI to make sure the double vision was not the effect of something deadly, like a brain tumor.



The week before I had been afraid of living my future but at that moment, I became afraid that I would not have one. I realized that all the things I thought I was promised, like going to college, getting married, having children, were not set in stone. I became extremely afraid that my life would be only eighteen years long.

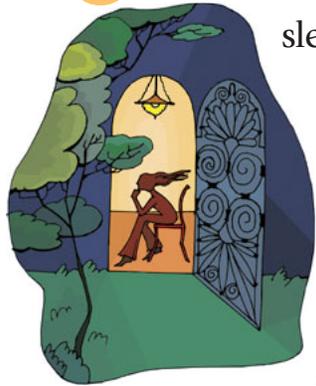
To my relief, the MRI showed no tumor but I had lesions on my brain. The doctor sent me to a neurologist who recommended a spinal tap. Once the test results were back, I was diagnosed with MS and learned I needed to begin treatment right away.

## A blessing in disguise (cont.)



I stopped being the young girl that I had been and finally took responsibility for my life. I was dealing with something I had to face on my own.

It is something that I will have to confront for the rest of my life and no one, not even my parents, can save me from it. It is a part of my daily routine, from giving myself shots to feeling exhausted every night before I go to sleep.



But more importantly, it is a part of my future. I do not know how long my future will be. Like everyone else, I do not know when I will die. But, because I went through a time thinking I had no future at all, I am ready now to live the future I have always wanted. I am now prepared to leave home, go to college, and start my own life. I am willing to fight for what I want. I will not let anything stop me from chasing my dreams.

Multiple sclerosis is something that I will have to live with for the rest of my life, but I'm prepared to survive it and I will. 



**A message from Dr. Lauren Krupp, director of the National Pediatric MS Center at Stony Brook, New York:**

**“MS is typically diagnosed in adults, but children as young as two have developed it. In our center, 95% of the children and teens with MS do not have a parent with MS. It is critically important for adults with MS not to think that their children are at risk.**

**“It is just as vital for young adults who have a parent with MS not to think that they are at risk. Genetics plays a very small role in making a person susceptible to MS.**

**“Pediatric MS is rare. So far, we have evaluated 55 patients younger than 17. Thirty have clinically definite MS.”**

## MS—Is it different for a teenager?

I don't know. I have not lived through the experience of being diagnosed as an adult. Through observation, however, I can see three main areas where the challenges for a person my age are different: school, friends and family, and medical care.

### **Medical care: A much more difficult diagnosis**

Since it is rare to be diagnosed so young, it takes doctors a longer time to make the diagnosis. Also, due to the small number of cases neurologists see each year of MS in teenagers or kids, they are not very knowledgeable about how to act toward a child. This proved to be extremely frustrating when doctors tried to keep everything from me and work solely with my parents. I remember wanting to just scream, "this is my body and I want to know what's wrong!"

While anyone with MS needs time finding the right doctor, it is even more challenging for a teen to find a doctor who will not only respect and be open with a young person, but also be extra sensitive. I remember that some of my more knowledgeable doctors were not. I was twelve years old. One doctor wanted to do a spinal tap without anesthetic. He explained that adults don't use anesthetics so why should I. It was hard enough going through the diagnosis, but I felt more pressure was added by insensitive doctors.

### **Friends and family: equal caregivers**

Since teenagers spend more time with friends and in school than with family, their caretaker situations are vastly different. An adult might move in with parents to get extra help, or might get their much needed daily assistance



**Find a doctor who will respect and be open with a young person.**

from a spouse. Since teens with MS spend so much time in school and out of school with friends, our caretaker situations are not dominated by one person. My friends had to be able to take care of me almost as much as my parents.

I had to choose friends wisely. I needed friends who could keep an eye on me and whom I could trust. But I also needed friends who, at the same time, treated me as an equal. At times it was tough getting used to different people and their own styles of care. But it was a great advantage. By necessity, I developed a great support system.

I suppose a teenager's relationship with family is very different once MS is diagnosed. A lot of teens go through a rebellious stage in which they hate their parents. I could not afford to have this stage. I appreciated (and continue to appreciate) everything my parents did (and continue to do) for me.

It can be hard at times to realize how dependent I am on them, and how much closer we are than my friends and their parents. That is not very normal for a teenager, but I have had to learn to be thankful and to realize that having MS really does make me different. I am forced to rely on them for my physical needs, but they are much more understanding of my 'teen needs' like friends and social outings. I face challenges finding the right friends, and finding a balance with my parents so that I can grow up and live a normal life.

## **Here we come to the biggy—SCHOOL!**

This is the largest challenge affecting the life of a teenager with MS. School is an environment that seems specially designed to let a whole new range of symptoms be discovered. Cognitive symptoms show up in school. My problems with memory, concentration, reading ability, etc. are all much more noticeable in this setting. Yes, many people of all ages have these symptoms



**My friends had to be able to take care of me almost as much as my parents.**

but at my school we are constantly tested, read large amounts of very challenging text, and are required to meet certain standards.

Next consider my absentee rate. The year I was diagnosed I missed 60 days of school, and each year afterward I definitely missed a lot more than was allowed. It was a challenge that made me determine my priorities. My health came first. Next I started to think about the most important part of school: to learn, not the grades. This helped me get through at least learning something even if my work was not getting me A's. It also helped that my school was understanding and supported the "learning" over "grades" theory.

School also presented some of my most emotional challenges. Being in school every day with healthy teenagers was the most "in your face" reminder that I have MS. I had to strive to develop my own talents and blessings and not compare myself to other people. This was one of the hardest things I've had to do. It took time but it has made me stronger than my peers.

## **It all comes down to balance**

Balancing friends, a good social life, family, and school while taking care of my health the entire time is very difficult. It's very hard to not go out with friends when I need more rest. The balance is finding when it is worth it and when it is not. Throughout all the challenges that I face, I must see the blessings and the good that comes out of every difficult situation. My advice to all teenagers with MS is to embrace the hardships and make the most of them in order to live every moment to the fullest! 🌀



**Being in school every day...was the most "in your face" reminder that I have MS.**

## **Talk to us and other teens about MS!**

**Send us your letters, stories, poetry, and art. E-mail:**  
[editor@nmss.org](mailto:editor@nmss.org). Mail to: Teen InsideMS, National MS Society,  
733 Third Avenue, NY 10017-3288.

**Please send artwork (cartoons, drawings, or pictures) via email or on a CD (jpeg format). We cannot return material or be responsible for original artwork, so please send your work this way. We will notify you if your work is going to be published.**

**Please include your age, name, and address or e-mail address. We will not release this to anyone. (If you are under 18, we may need a form signed by a parent or guardian.)**



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