

Dear Gillian,

Here's my story...

I pressed one tiny speaker into my right ear, then my left, reached down and cranked the volume to a deafening level. I ducked below a steel bar weighing 225 pounds, rested the bar between my shoulder blades and slowly lifted it off the rack. 12 squats to go and then onto dead lifts. Leg day in the gym, everyone hates it but it must be done. My legs will be sore tomorrow, or so I thought...

As I walked into work the next day something didn't feel right. My legs weren't sore, they should be, but they're not, they feel weird. Something else was wrong with my left hamstring and glute - they were totally numb. Wow, I must have pinched a nerve or something in the gym. "Whatever, it'll be fine in a few days," I thought. And they were, about two weeks later my legs felt normal and my hamstring and glute were back to normal.

A few weeks later I was driving to work and I happened to look down. When I did I felt a weird twinge in my right toe. "Hmm... That's weird," I thought. What's going on with that? Must be that nerve again... Well this, this didn't go away. This *head tilt down thing* got worse. It got to the point where whenever I tilted my head down it felt like an electric shock going through my body. Little did I know that these were my first noticeable symptoms of two little letters that would bring me to my knees.

Time for a trip to the doctor I thought. I explain my symptoms, and I get the head nod and the "hmm," "interesting." "Well, we're gonna have you get some blood tests, X-rays then an MRI." "Ok, no problem" I said, I'm ready to get this pinched nerve fixed. Blood tests come back and the doc says it looks like I may have Lupus, (*which ended up not being lupus*). But she said she needs the MRI results and the rest of the blood tests back, and not to worry. About a week later, December 20 to be exact, I get a call. "Hey Travis, we need you come back in here and get some more MRIs we found some abnormalities. Damn I said; I knew I should have never gone to the doctor. Six more MRIs - c-spine, t-spine, and brain. What do they need a brain MRI for? I hurt my back, not my brain.

Three days later I'm back in the doctor's office. She brings in a chair and has a seat. Well, we may have some problems here. The MRI reports show you may have Multiple Sclerosis. I'm like, "Okay. What's that?" I mean I know what it is, kind of, but what does that mean? She said, "Well we need to get you into a neurologist so he can confirm it. The soonest we can get you in is 29 days from now." "Okay. Whatever you say doc."

29 days later my wife and I are headed to see an MS specialist in Delaware. I explain my symptoms while he is reading over the MRI report. Then he does a few tests, similar to a sobriety test. The one thing that stuck out to me was, he held his finger like he was pointing to the sky. "Touch the tip of my finger with your right index finger," he said. "Okay. Easy. No problem." I reached out and touched it with no problem, nothing crazy just how you would imagine touching someone's fingertip. He moved his finger and we repeated the process about five times. No

problem. "Okay. Now your left index finger." "Ok, no problem." I reached out but the closer I got to his fingertip, I noticed something. My finger was not smooth and to the point, it was shaking uncontrollably, nothing dramatic, but noticeable. He looked at me, then my wife. "Did you see that?" "Yes," I said, "What's up with that?" It's a tremor he said. "Hmm, how bout that."

He sat back in his chair and said, "After hearing your symptoms, seeing the MRI and my evaluation there is no doubt in my mind that you do in fact have Multiple Sclerosis. But don't worry, we are much better off than we were ten years ago, and we will fight this together and I will be there with you every step of the way."

I leave out of there thinking - whatever, no big deal, I can handle this, I may have to make some changes, but I'll get through it. When I get home I'll look on the Internet and see what happens to people who have Multiple Sclerosis. Well, after about four hours online I was pretty sure my life was over, and I should just get my Glock and end it all right now. Seriously. I'm only 33 years old; I convinced myself I would be in a wheelchair by the end of the month! Then over the next week I had every symptom that MS could give you, twice. I was depressed. I didn't want to get out of bed.

Then I came to my senses and got my ass up and back in the gym, and back to life. I'm headed back to the doc to get on some disease modifying drugs on February 21<sup>st</sup>. I've upped my vitamin D level to about 6000iu per day, I taking three triple strength fish oil pills every day and I'm feeling fine. Well, I have some issues; my hand feels like it has icy-hot on it. I'll have to let my doc know about that one.

MS sucks, but I refuse to let it rule my life. I will use it to my advantage. I will try to help people who are diagnosed, and are having a rough time. I've even been looking at lots of clinical trials I can get involved in. In closing, just remember, "Things turn out best, for the people who make best from the way things turn out".

God gives the greatest burdens to his strongest warriors.

Sincerely,

Travis Hill