

University and Update

I started University for the second time back in September. My biggest wish right now is to just complete this degree, I'm studying Sociology and I absolutely love it. When I chose it, I chose it on the basis I wanted a 'normal' degree, normal being proper holidays, weekends and one that allows for extra-curricular activities and a social life. I couldn't have chosen a more perfect degree if I designed it myself. That in itself drives me to want to complete it more than anything but after this month it seems doing so will be nothing short of a miracle.

Anyway, when I started I knew it wasn't going to be easy, back in September I was still working and testing every limitation under the sun. Holding any significant weight was becoming a bigger issue back then, now I just about manage my rucksack and some days I even have to make that as light as possible (for anyone else with lifting and handling problems - go for the wheelie bag things, I'm getting one now).

I had a number of concerns, many based around the reality of not being able to predict a flare-up or indeed any further degeneration and symptoms popping up. My biggest concern back then was exams - at that time my arms were not having good days and the fear was that exam day would come and firstly I would be midst a flare-up and second I wouldn't be able to write. The University was awesome and after I provided all the relevant evidence they wrote up a 'Personal Learning Plan' which included doing my exams on the computer so I didn't have to write. That was a big relief in itself and I was really happy with that.

- As I understand it, the vast majority, if not all, Universities across the globe have some sort of similar service available to accommodate students, so anyone going to Uni - do get in touch with them and make life easier for yourself.

The first six weeks of Uni were the best ever, I got myself involved in nearly every opportunity going that didn't clash. I was totally on top of my reading, was barely in any pain because acupuncture was working aces and it was just absolutely great.

Then November rolled around, I hadn't been to Acupuncture for a few weeks and the pain began kicking in. I was back on full doses of painkillers and NSAIDs to try and bring it under control but they just wouldn't work, nor would any amount of biofreeze - be it the spray or gel. I was grateful however that despite the pain my arms hadn't gone, and luckily they still haven't, thank god.

I managed to get an appointment to see my GP that same week, I looked rough (that's the polite version), we discussed the problem and my main worry was the fact this flare-up had stemmed from nothing. This time I had not been testing my limitations, I had not provoked it any way - I was being good - yep, that's how much I want to complete this degree. And for the first time ever my GP stopped staring at her computer screen and turned to tell me it's not going to get better. Of course I knew that but for some reason hearing it just made it hurt. Then just to add salt to the wound she then told me it was time to start long-term pain relief. I actually wanted to cry, had I not been required to go and attend several meetings that day I probably would have curled up and cried - yes I still partially live in denial even though I know the reality - I don't know why.

Due to several factors which will be addressed in the following chronicle 'Medication' I couldn't bring myself to start the new medication and thus it stayed on my desk for a few weeks. I flew out to New York City for 5 days after much persuasion and helpful advice even though at that point I knew I really should have been booking a date with an MRI scanner. I

landed and went straight into Uni. I made it there and back with the complete help of being fully medicated for most of the entire trip.

It is now the very last day of November and I think if I totaled up the good moments pain wise for the entire month it would equate to about 2-3 days max. Earlier this week I was beginning to lose it, and for the first time ever it was not because of being tired, it was not something that was from being sleep deprived. I think it was coming from the thought that 'I can't do this' because after a month of increasing pain I didn't know what to do.

I will address my medication situation in the mentioned chronicle, but in short, due to medication problems especially evident on the day I went to my god-father's house last weekend. Not only did I feel like I had been stabbed several times, but then I was also half bent over double with what I can only explain as stomach cramps/burning. I was past the stage of being able to hide it and I just wanted to lie down.

I think I have had to face reality more this week and that's why it's been an emotional one, I've been resting more though and trying to find a new balance. University is being very understanding; I'm in constant updates with my personal tutor and now I just hope I can get the last of this term's assignments written on time.