

The Fear

I think an element of fear runs through all of us and especially a selection of my entries. I've titled this one 'The Fear' because it was the under-lying and over-riding emotion that consumed me for months. It's less now but it still arrives back in parts.

My biggest fear, as is no secret, is surgery. I've had 5 previous surgeries – none of which were spinal and none of them scared me in the slightest. In my last surgery in fact, to the anaesthetist's amusement, I went in smiling – I didn't have a single iota of doubt or fear at all that the surgery wouldn't be okay. I knew prior to surgery that there would be complications but still I wasn't fazed. It was the recovery that knocked me back. Regardless, what I'm trying to say is that, it isn't surgery in itself that terrifies me, it's the fact its spinal surgery and that the magnitude of things that could go wrong are immense.

Successful spinal surgery is still in its prime and most of it is done on people that are well over 22 years old. The consultants I've seen over the past months are not deluded either, they are well aware it's not their first choice, and that it's risky. (Please note this isn't to scare others off of surgery, the additional complications are a result of my fusion in itself and the resulting degeneration – others may be in a better position). Just the thought of someone operating near my spinal cord freezes me, then I know like every other surgery I've had, it is highly likely to encounter something unexpected. And that's before I even have to wake up to deal with whatever has gone wrong afterwards, and then go through that trauma.

The other fear, at the time it was losing mobility in my arms, but now, thankfully something has stabilised and that isn't an imminent problem anymore. I'm sure it isn't, because I made the consultant triple check and explain in detail why tetraplegia was no longer much a concern so that I was super sure when I got home and told everybody there was no way I was consenting to surgery, that I had ground to stand on. If you can contemplate how much I didn't want surgery then incorporate that I would have gone through it so I didn't lose the mobility of my arms – then you could understand how scared I was it would actually happen. Many restless nights during those months, is all I will say.

After those 2 thought-destroying fears, the rest seem very light in comparison. Third in line was not making it through the academic year, but my determination to get to the end of the year could not be faulted, if I do say so myself. It doesn't matter what my medical professionals threw at me and how much I got messed around, I continually tried to readapt to stay on track. It blew the hell out of my personal tutors (my opinion) trying to keep up with the constant changes but we got there – and I can honestly say that everything I managed to achieve this year is because they were there, keeping me together from the side-lines and putting up with all the drama, even though they really didn't have to at all. Not finishing my assignments on time though, was more a diversion fear from the two more bigger and pressing ones – because if either of those came into play and went wrong, let's face it, I wouldn't have been returning to Uni in a long while, if at all.

Everybody I spoke to knew I didn't want surgery, it was the sole topic that fuelled a whole load of other discussions, each more unpleasant than the last in most cases, but when are fears a pleasant conversation? The good thing was though, that I did talk about them, and I did share them so I didn't keep them bottled up inside. Not everybody I shared my fears with received me well or I them, but the majority did and just being listened to and being kept rational, maintained my sanity.