

Facing Health Setbacks with a Gospel Perspective

These young adults have found peace as they have faced their health challenges with faith.

Many people will face health challenges at some point in their lives. Such health setbacks can be discouraging and sometimes unexpected. These young adults have found they have much to contribute, regardless of their physical setbacks. They've developed a deeper appreciation of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and have found answers and peace in the plan of salvation.



FINDING WAYS TO SERVE

I was diagnosed at birth with a form of muscular dystrophy called spinal muscular atrophy, a disease that progressively weakens all voluntary and involuntary muscles. I have lived a life where I have to have people help me daily, hand and foot, and that is all I have ever known. Many times while growing up, I questioned what I am supposed to be doing. I always prayed for a way to give back to others and serve them.

I joined the Church in my late twenties, and one of the biggest blessings of being a member of the Church has been the ability for me to serve. I clearly remember my first time inside the temple. I was sitting with my friend Julia in the baptistry, and she said to me, "You need people to help you with everything because you can't do it for yourself. That's what it's like for those who have died. They don't have bodies, so they need someone else to do their temple work for them. We can do for them what they can't do for themselves."

In that moment, for the first time ever, I felt needed. I finally knew what I was supposed to do. A year later I went to the temple to receive my own endowment. I started attending the temple once a week, and eventually I was set apart to work in the temple.

Once I enter the temple, I feel as though I have the strength of a million people. I can suddenly do anything. The worldly barriers I face daily are lifted and I can give back.

Biancca Berry, California, USA



LIVING A FULL LIFE

When I was five years old, I was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. Despite the everyday struggle of living with diabetes, as I've grown up I have come to realize that this disease is an opportunity that is helping me become more like my Savior, Jesus Christ.

At one point I became troubled about living a full life with diabetes. One morning I read in the Book of Mormon about the second time the stripling warriors were spared from death in battle. It really was a miracle that not one life was lost, though all were wounded. "And we do justly ascribe it to the miraculous power of God, because of their exceeding faith [in God]" (Alma 57:26).

Those verses struck me with power. The Spirit whispered to me that I too, if I had enough faith, would be preserved to live a long and happy life. Hope filled me as I knelt down and thanked Heavenly Father for sending me peace. I realized my mistake in not trusting and having faith in God. In the scriptures, the young men in Helaman's band were devoted to protecting their families and fighting for their freedom, religion, and country. I too needed to focus more on helping those around me.

I have hope that if I strive to be healthy, put my faith and trust in God, and focus more on my purpose than on myself, I will be sustained and my days will "not be numbered less" (D&C 122:9).

Aubri Robinson, Minnesota, USA



LEARNING ABOUT THE ATONEMENT

My health issues started before I was born. I had what was called an omphalocele, meaning I was born with some of my internal organs on the outside of my body. Since then, scar tissue has caused many bowel obstructions, which paralyze the digestive tract. Between these bowel obstructions, I suffer from chronic abdominal pain.

This condition affects every aspect of my life. Sometimes I miss out on family parties and activities with friends. There are times when I have to call in sick to work and email my college professors to work out how to make up schoolwork. Luckily, I have an extremely supportive wife who always encourages me and helps me to stay positive.

My health challenges have altered my plans in many ways. For instance, I've had to repeat many classes in college due to multiple unplanned hospital stays and surgeries. I have had to change my studies to something that will be easier to complete in my condition.

I honestly don't think I could bear this trial in my life without a firm testimony of the gospel, especially



Jennie and Tyler Aldous

of the Savior's Atonement. Knowing that Jesus Christ is my Savior and Redeemer has had a profound impact on my perspective. Without Him, I would feel helpless and hopeless. Through Him, I am empowered and enabled. Because Jesus Christ endured all pains and sicknesses for us, I'm never alone in my trials if I come unto Him. He knows exactly how I feel at any given time because He has felt it Himself. Relying on the Savior has truly changed my life and helped me to make the best of my situation and not pity myself.

I'm blessed to have a testimony of the Resurrection and to know that my body will be made perfect and whole. I came to this testimony through many years of doing the established things that bind me to God: praying, studying the scriptures, going to church, and pondering. It hasn't been easy, but through the power of the Spirit I have learned much about what the Lord has in store for me, even though I have these physical limitations.

Tyler Aldous, Utah, USA



BELIEVE IN THE PROMISES OF GOD

"I have observed in the lives and examples of others that exercising strong and abiding faith in Jesus Christ and His promises

provides the sure hope of better things to come. This sure hope steadies us, bringing the strength and power we need in order to endure. [See Ether 12:4.] When we can link our suffering to an assurance of purpose in our mortality and *more specifically* to the reward awaiting us in heavenly places, our faith in Christ increases and we receive comfort to our souls."

Elder Evan A. Schmutz of the Seventy, "God Shall Wipe Away All Tears," *Ensign*, Nov. 2016, 118.

RELYING ON FAITH

My mental image of being diagnosed with a disease was completely different from reality: I imagined myself lying in a hospital bed, weakly breathing as the doctors broke the news to me that I was sick. My family would be surrounding me, encouraging me as I raced back to health.

Reality, more often than not, is a lot less cinematic. When I was diagnosed with my disease, I was sitting on the floor of my apartment, feeling the healthiest I'd ever been. I was alone in my room, frantically taking notes as the doctor told me over the phone that I had a gene mutation that prevented my body from processing folate. The doctor told me what to expect and what preventative measures I could take. The worst part about the diagnosis, though, was that I already knew exactly what to expect if I didn't take action—I'd seen it all my life. I had inherited my disease from my mom.



Jessica (right) and her mother

Growing up, I knew my mom had health problems. As the years passed, her illness reared up like the Greek monster Hydra—once one problem was figured out, two more would take its place. It wasn't until one of her biggest medical emergencies—a brain tumor that had to be immediately removed—that I realized just how much spiritual strength my mom had to have through all these events.

My mom showed me how to “not shrink”¹ when overcome with trials. No matter the state of her health, she has always been faithful and reliant on God. Although she does everything she can to become healthy, she also has the faith to follow God's plan, whether that involves a healthy body or not. Instead of shrinking in fear, my mom relies on God to help her become a kinder, more patient version of herself, serving others and becoming more Christlike every day. Instead of turning into a shell of her former self, she has blossomed into an exemplary child of God. She has understood that this disease, while painful, is not who she is. Her example has taught me one of the most important lessons I've ever learned.

I'll be the first one to tell you that the future terrifies me; I've seen what my genetic disease can do. At the same time, however, I feel extremely blessed to know how to handle it. I know what it looks like to have faith in the face of fear because I've seen it firsthand. Just like I need to take preventative measures for my disease not to worsen, I need to take equally as many measures to make sure I do not shrink. I will, like my mom has, “look unto [God] in every thought; doubt not, fear not” (D&C 6:36).

Jessica Griffith, Texas, USA

NOTE

1. See David A. Bednar, “Accepting the Lord's Will and Timing,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2016, 28–35.