

CHRONIC PAIN · DEPRESSION · STUCK · UNCATEGORIZED

## No Man Left Behind

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"No man left behind," they say. Saying it over and over and over until it's engrained into the fabric of our being. So from a young age were programmed to think our peers will adhere to that policy. Most of the time they do. Until you get sick and are confined to a bed almost 24 hours a day. If you are lucky you will have people who **will** support you through it all, but that's not what I'm talking about.

When you are chronically ill to the point I previously mentioned, your life stops: you're "stuck." However, the world still spins without you. And this can lead to a depressive state where one feels completely left behind. It's not your friend's fault they get to have a normal college experience, it's not your cousin's fault they got married, it's not your friend's fault that your best friend had a baby, they're just living their lives.

And from personal experience: It really hurts. There is no sugar coating the fact that someone out there is living a life that we wish we could live, and I'm guilty of it too. I wish that I could go out without weighing the consequence of exerting my energy. I wish I could go to a concert so loud my ears ring days after, but I can't. I have to **count** my spoons everyday and dole them out with the precision of a sharp shooter because I am limited. At first, I was bitter. How come my best friend got to go to college? How come my friend got the scholarship, when she didn't do the work? I shut them out, shut down and retreated into myself, but then I realized there is another option: I can have a life. For normal people this may hardly seem as though it's a groundbreaking idea, but for someone with chronic illness it seems like a fairytale. Here is a short list of tips on how to have a life when you have debilitating illness:

### 1. Skype with your friends

You don't have to be physically present to stay connected. You can use Skype, facetime, or any type of technology that lets you converse with your friends without ever leaving your bed.

### 2. Play online games

Remember Words With Friends or Draw Something? Bring it back in style. Play any game on your phone, gaming console, or computer where you can connect to your friends or family and get some healthy competition going.

### 3. Come out of your room

When you have severe chronic pain all you want to do is stay curled up in bed. Don't! Go sit on the couch and watch TV with your family. Being surrounded by people that love you for at least a bit will make you feel a part of something. And you can never underestimate the importance of that.

### 4. Make sure to know your limit

When making plans, if you know all you can do is go to a movie, then only go to the movie. Do not be guilt tripped past your limit because I promise you will most definitely pay for it later.

Good luck out there!

-MF