



## **Exercise/Physical Activity with MS**

### **JUDY BOONE**

When I was diagnosed with MS I started to read a lot of articles about the impact of exercise and just how it had been proven to just help people with MS. And so I made it my mission to just start a regular routine, and just to see if it helped me. Initially the walking at work was what got me started. And I had other people to support me and to walk along with me. And I had to do it, even though it wasn't always easy.

### **LYNN WILLIAMS**

Thirty years ago and more people who had MS, um, were told that they shouldn't engage in physical activity. And over the years we've discovered that that simply is not true.

### **DAN MELFI**

I felt better. Um, the spasticity in my legs weren't as, as strong. It's amazing when I do yoga, even though it's so hard for me in the first three or four minutes to do anything, after 15 or 20, it's like, wow, I'll feel so much better.

### **LYNN WILLIAMS**

Someone with MS can exercise really following the same guidelines as anyone else, with attention to their body temperature and a couple of other things. It's just a matter of where are you, what's appropriate for you, and what can we come up that you like to do, and that you will do on a regular basis to promote your, your physical wellness. Increased energy, increased cardiovascular function, really increasing exercise activity improves the function of all the systems, all the body systems. It improves your, your brain function. It improves your pulmonary function. Pretty much everything that you can think of about your physical

function and your health and wellness is improved by participating in an exercise program.

### **DAVID ALTMAN**

Right when I walk in there I, I start feeling better. When I start working out it hurts, but the more that I work out the more that goes away. On Mondays I do legs. On Tuesday I do chest and shoulders. Wednesday I do back. Thursday I do arms. And Friday I do legs again. I have my fatigue days. Yesterday I didn't have a good day. But, uh, it's not all the time.

### **LYNN WILLIAMS**

Exercise seems to help people manage their fatigue better. They still experience the fatigue, but they can work through it better. They can sustain things longer into the day.

### **NEGAR NIAZI**

I'm very, very active, at least five days a week, if not seven days a week. As soon as I go, especially in the swimming pool, I actually get energized. So if I'm actually feeling tired for the day, if I have fatigue, MS fatigue, which I sometimes get, when I go in the swimming pool I actually get energy back. As soon as my body hits the water, it revives.

### **JUDY BOONE**

I had a lot of fatigue in the beginning. Now I think exercise is my passion, because it just makes me feel so much better every day. And I think that I'm able to do a lot of the things that, um, that I do because I am very physically active. I lost a lot of weight. Before I lost weight, um, the extra pounds did have an impact on how I felt with MS. I just didn't feel like doing a lot of things, even though I wasn't that tired. Um, and just overall I feel so much better. Um, my husband and I we work out together a lot. He is definitely my motivator. And sometimes when I don't feel like it, he'll say, get ready to do the exercises. And a lot of times on my walker when he's on the elliptical, so we kind of help motivate each other. And, um, it's more fun when you have somebody to workout with.

## **DAN MELFI**

You know, probably the easiest thing anybody can do is a yoga or a Tai Chi type thing. You can do it in a chair. You can, you can do it just like, you know, anybody does it. You know, I would always have something there you can grab. You gotta do it every day. And that's the hard part. 'Cause you get bored. And you think, I don't want to do this. I don't feel good. And it's, it's that thing you make it into a routine of your life like eating, like taking your medicine, that's part of my medicine now is exercise.

## **LYNN WILLIAMS**

Obesity is, is an epidemic issue. And the MS population is not excluded from that. Exercise is, is integral to being able to turn that around in terms of the weight loss and the management of the body composition, but also to improve the mobility, and give them the strength, the fundamental strength that they need. Then you're going to be able to walk better. You're not going to fall as often or at all. And you will be able to more easily complete the tasks that you have to do every day, the necessary ones and the elective ones. Muscle strength improves, range of motion improves, um, flexibility improves, balance skill improves, abilities to walk improve. If you are more physically able then you get out of the house more. Out to a family gathering or a social gathering, or church, or the things that mean something. Exercise, uh, it can impact mood in a very positive manner.

## **NEGAR NIAZI**

Not only is it good for my body and it feels amazing, but it also is good for the soul, for my spirit, it keeps my energy on the positive side. The moment I put my foot in the water, I feel transformed. I feel like I physically I am now able to do a whole lot more. And also then emotionally it feels wonderful.

## **LYNN WILLIAMS**

The pool is a really nice, um, the water is a great medium for people that mobility issues. People with MS can exercise using the standard equipment, if you will, treadmills, bikes, elliptical, pools. It can be lifting weights. I can be using, um, therapy balls. It can be really pretty much whatever that person is interested in modified to their specific abilities and, um, interests, so that they're safe.

**LYNN WILLIAMS**

Adaptive equipment in exercise is a broadening field all the time. We have recumbent bicycles that can be pedaled either with the arms or the legs, that we didn't have a few years ago. People with MS and other populations certainly can be afraid of exercising, because there, it's an unknown. They don't know how they should feel. That's the piece where, uh, you're seeing a physical therapist or an occupational therapist. To teach people the principles of exercises in terms how, how many repetitions, and how many groups of repetitions, and how many times a week

**DAN MELFI**

I'd start and then try to build. But the thing is, do something. Because in, at the end of the day it's gonna help you a lot.

**JUDY BOONE**

It's very hard to fit it into my day. But because I am a busy mom and I do work full-time, and I do have two sons who play sports year round, who love to eat. Um, but I have to do it, so it's just a priority for me. And I, I have to do it, if I want to continue to do all those things with my family, and to enjoy the activities that my sons are involved in.

**LYNN WILLIAMS**

You make appointments to get other things done, you make a list of other things that you're going to do, and you check those things off as you go through the day. So getting your exercise and making sure your exercise program gets done is part of, it's a lifestyle thing. If you intend to be serious about it, and you're going to make sure it gets done, it needs to go on the list. And as time goes on people often find that they enjoy it more, and they require those types of, of constructs a little less often to make things work for them.

**JUDY BOONE**

And just, it just makes me feel so much better every day mentally and physically.