

## **The View from Here**

**By: Justine Chichester**

I read this quote the other day and it really resonated with me. “Stop hating yourself for everything you aren’t. Start loving yourself for everything that you are.”

I’ve been making some progress in my physical therapy lately. I started walking a little outside in front of my house. Using my walker, I’m able to take some steps down the ramp outside of my front door. I’ve managed to also walk a few more steps down my driveway, which I was so scared of when I first started. Most recently I’ve been able to take a few more steps down the sidewalk in front of my neighbors’ house too.

While up on my feet, I try to remember all of the instructions from my physical therapist – weight shift when you step with the left, weight shift when you step with the right; try to take the weight out of your arms; press down on each foot. Who knew walking could be this complicated? But at the same time, my mind is also flooded, once again, with the memories of what was. How easy it used to be to walk down this same sidewalk without even thinking about it. Daily walks with my dog Bailey; trick or treating at Halloween with my nieces and nephews. As I struggle now to move around on my feet, I can’t help but think how much I used to take this walk in front of my house for granted. Now I struggle to take a few steps to the end of the driveway. It will never be like it used to be. No matter how hard I work, it will never be the same.

My husband proudly took some video of me walking outside with my physical therapist. When I watched it back, my heart sank. I was so disappointed in what I saw. My struggle to move around was difficult for me to watch. I couldn’t believe how much I was relying on my arms, not my legs, and how short, choppy and sometimes non-existent my steps were. Suddenly I had lost all faith in my progress and how far I’d come.

It was so easy for me to let the negative thoughts overwhelm the positive ones. I so readily forgot about all of the hard work I had been putting in every, single day since I came home from the hospital. And what about all of those moments, lying in my hospital bed, I promised myself I would be out there participating in life again? How could I be this critical of myself now that I’m here, doing all of things I promised I would do?

I had to regroup. Had to remind myself that although my steps may not look like they used to, and I may never be able to take nearly as many as I used to, I am still doing it. I have fought very hard to get here and I continue to fight every day to get just a little bit further. A little bit further down the sidewalk and a little bit further towards being proud of myself living my new life everyday with a disability.

So I posted the video to my Facebook and my Instagram pages. Struggles and all. Just put it all out there for everyone to see. I was flooded with love and support from family and friends who watched and saw the progress, not the flaws. And I was proud. Just another reminder for me to “stop hating myself for everything I’m not, and start loving myself for everything I am.”