

Winning Submission for Horizon Fitness Treadmill Giveaway

Some days I can hardly move. I am completely paralyzed by extreme fatigue. On the worst days, I sit terrified and helpless, without the words to explain how I feel. I was diagnosed with Lupus several years ago. Lupus is a chronic, autoimmune disorder that affects everyone differently. For me, the biggest effect has been adjusting to these flare-ups that leave me completely wiped of energy. Sometimes a flare-up will sneak up on me in the middle of a trip to the grocery store and I know that I need to go straight home. Some days I just wake up knowing that it's going to be a bad day because my legs don't feel like they "work". As a marathon runner, it has been really difficult to adjust to this change. I used to push myself. I used to love the point in runs where I'd get a "runner's high". However, things changed after my Lupus diagnosis. I stopped running as often and I certainly didn't push myself anymore. I was too scared. During a bad flare-up my body fails me. No matter how badly I want to move, I can't. Marathon training taught me that mental strength can get you to the finish line when your physical strength isn't enough. Sadly, it doesn't work the same with Lupus. I didn't know how to balance life with Lupus with the active life I'd had before, so I just stopped trying and let the Lupus win.

Earlier this summer, I was going through emails when I saw a message from GOTR-Chicago. The email featured an essay by a girl named Hannah about how GOTR helped her become more fearless. I don't know what it was about her words, but they struck a chord with me. I reread her essay several times over the course of the next few days. She inspired me. She reminded me of the way I felt when I first discovered running. I wanted to feel that way again. I missed that old version of myself; the version that got lost in the Lupus diagnosis. I made a commitment to myself that I was going to run another marathon. I ran to raise money for GOTR-Chicago, but really I was doing this one for me.

In October I finished the Chicago Marathon in 4:36, nearly 30 minutes faster than any of my previous 4 marathons. I sprinted through mile 26. Me? Sprint at mile 26? I felt amazing! During those final miles I resolved that I will not be someone who lets Lupus control her life. Finishing this race meant so much more to me than I could have imagined. It wasn't about the 26 miles I ran that day. It was about finding my old self again. Training was the therapy I needed to feel strong again in my own body. Had it not been for Hannah's GOTR essay, I'm not sure that I would've tried another marathon. Hannah revitalized me. And now, I too am fearless. Thanks Hannah.

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