

Brooke....it really made me realise that its just another aspect of life, nothing to really stress about.

My name is Brooke and I am 20 years old.

My alopecia began when I was 4 years old with a small bald patch on top of my head, slowly it began to spread and my hair became very thin.

My family and I visited many experts who could not give us any answers as to why my hair was falling out; they mentioned it may be due to various potions used to treat head lice when I was in kindergarten. They believed that maybe the hair follicles were damaged by the solutions used, but this was never proven and too this day I am still unsure as to why my hair fell out. I was diagnosed with Alopecia Universalis soon after.

For a while I was able to cover the patches over with my thinning hair but at about 5 my hair was too thin, and myself and my family made the decision to shave it off. I remember sitting on the floor in front of the couch ready for it all to be cut off, I was terrified about what all the other children would think at school. It was made a litter easier with dad offering to buy me a scooter if I braved the shave, and it all began from there.

At school I wore bandanas and hats and eventually got a synthetic wig to start wearing. I struggled at school with many of the children not understanding, resulting in them talking and making me feel uncomfortable, this resulted in 5 school changes where eventually I found a place where I settled in and graduated year 12. It was during this time that I started to develop true friends, ones that recognised my hair loss as just another part of me, to this day many of those friends are still by my side. I look at this as a one of the many positive aspects about having alopecia, true friends.

It was at about 17 years old that I started to recognise my alopecia as a part of me and started to accept that fact that I was 'special'. It was made easier by my very supportive family, friends and partner who helped me open up about my alopecia and embrace it. When explaining alopecia to people I always tell them the positives; no shaving, limited shampoo and conditioner and reduced hair dresser visits.

At 18, I made the brave choice to travel to India on my own for 3 months on a volunteer trip, in which I had no choice but to show my roommates my bald head, they were so supportive and accepting, it really made me realise that its just another aspect of life, nothing to really stress about.

Today, I am very open about my alopecia and couldn't imagine my life without it. I am thankful for my family, partner and friends who are exceptionally accepting allowing me to just be myself.

