

Daneyl..... The Strands Of Me

Chances are, you've seen someone with Alopecia. Walked right past them even, and not known that they were any different to you. Since being diagnosed with Alopecia myself I've met and heard of more people having it then I would have ever imagined.

It's an autoimmune disorder that I have where my hair falls out. Hence the name of my blog; The Strands Of Me
www.thestrandsofme.com



Because it's easy to hide. It's easy to pull a wig on, or cover up with a scarf, and the world won't know any difference. No one will know they don't have any hair.

I was 23 when my Alopecia started. I had heard vaguely about it once – a story in a magazine – many years earlier and remember thinking "jeez, I hope that never happens to me". Many doctors and specialist visits later and I was diagnosed with Alopecia. The Australian Alopecia Areata Foundation's (AAAF) slogan is 'Alopecia. Areata...it's life changing'. That's absolutely right.

I went from a confident just married woman to someone who'd stand in front of the mirror for hours before exiting the house. I was unfortunate enough to have Alopecia Universalis – total body hair loss. You never realise how important your eyebrows are until you don't have them anymore. Exercising (in the comfort of my lounge room!) without eyebrows means the sweat just keeps rolling down into your eyes! But it is fun, if not a little traumatising, experimenting with drawing yourself new brows. Pencil thin brows do not suit me at all. And an added bonus of Universalis – not having to shave my legs!

As I mentioned earlier, Alopecia is really easy to hide and a good wig can make the world of difference to a bald woman. Suddenly I had my confidence back. I could walk down the street and go out with my new Husband carefree. But after much soul searching and itchy wig wearing I decided that headscarfs were the way to go for me. I'd get the often 'are you having cancer treatment' question, but I've always been happy to explain to anyone who'd listen that a healthy person can lose their hair as well. I'm extremely lucky that most of my hair has since regrown. I still have Alopecia Areata and am constantly covering bald patches on my scalp, but I know I'm so lucky to even have regrowth. Some, like the woman in the magazine, don't have hair again. Ever.

Alopecia changed my life. It made me so much more aware of how we perceive each other. Of how people judge each other. Once I started wearing only scarves it was amazing how many people I'd catch staring at me. Especially children or older people. Seriously, do not stare at someone and think they can't see you. You look like an idiot.

Alopecia also made me stronger. More confident in who I am, not just what I look like. It took a long time, but I did learn to be happier within myself, not just in front of the mirror. Everyday now I'm still learning that inner confidence.

Alopecia taught me not to judge someone by what they look like, but how they act. What they say. What they do. How they treat other people and how they treat themselves. That's what makes up a person. Not just how thin you are, what colour your hair is or what label clothes you wear. None of that really matters.

It's who you are inside that counts.

I've learnt a lot from Alopecia. What can it teach you?

www.aaaf.org.au