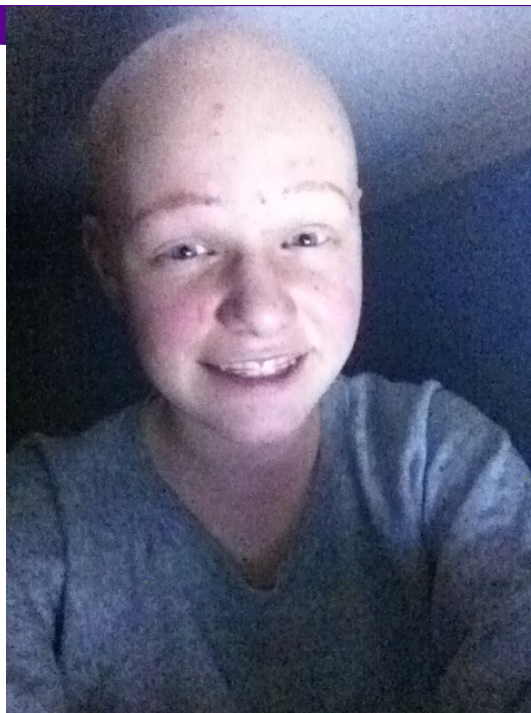


# Grace.....I am brave because I was forced into it. Let them stare, let them stare in admiration.

I'm my name is Grace and I am almost 14. Maybe my story will just be another story of an alopecian, but maybe it will inspire you to challenge yourself and see yourself in a different light.

For me, my hair was my identity. I loved my hair, it was the thing I loved most about how I looked; so to now have none, its hard. Although your hair shouldn't define you, society says it should.



In September 2013 I was told by my doctor I had Alopecia Areata and that it would most likely clear up. Everyone who found out about it told me that it defiantly would, me being only 13. I felt they were being very ignorant about the whole thing, I still do. You cant say, don't worry it will grow back because reality is you don't know. After about three months I had almost no hair left and being extremely self-conscious, my mum took me to buy a wig. After visiting several wig shops we finally found "the one". "The one" that would do that is. I had been wanting one just like my hair had been but soon discovered that doing that was extremely difficult. I also found out that I couldn't tie the wig back for school so my dreams of long hair once again were completely destroyed. During this time I hardly went out, not wanting anyone I knew to see me. I kept the whole thing a secret. Only one girl from school knew.

The new school year started. My first few days were terrible. Once again, people were very ignorant about the whole thing, a few teachers asking me about my new hair cut after seeing my school photo from the year before. Most of the girls at school were like that as well. I found those first few weeks at school terrible. The psychologist I was seeing didn't help, discouraging me from telling people, something I saw as a very brave thing to do, and even telling me to stop doing things like dancing and swimming because of trouble I may have with it. For a while everything was a big secret with almost everyone. I continued my dancing and I didn't wear my wig there but I stopped swimming. I wouldn't play sport at school and I became very quite and isolated. I felt like no one was able to help me. Slowly I told more and more people, first some friends then I decided to tell my class and then to stop rumours from spreading the year level. I began feeling so much happier. A weight had been lifted off my shoulders. I became me again. I didn't have to lie any more, I could be the real me.

Slowly I have started accepting myself and my alopecia more. At my school camp I was wig-less for three days. Not a single person cared. Why? Because I didn't care! Recently I competed at some dance competitions, wig-less. There were several hundreds of people there and yes, people stared, yes people looked but I did something I have never done before. I didn't let any of it stand in my way, I used it to make me stronger.

I am brave because I was forced into it. Let them stare, let them stare in admiration.

[www.aaaf.org.au](http://www.aaaf.org.au)



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