

James,..... Alopecia Areata has never stopped me from pursuing my dreams, if anything it has helped give more meaning to my life.



Life with Alopecia Areata: A Reflection

Imagine you are 10 years old, and one morning you wake up to find you have a bald patch at the back of your head the size of a golf ball. One month later all the hair on your body including your eyelashes and eyebrows have fallen out. This is a common occurrence among people with Alopecia Areata, and this is what happened to me.

One of the most embarrassing moments I experienced with Alopecia Areata was during roll call at primary school. Roll- call was conducted outside in the playground- and it was a windy day, I turned my head and looked towards the wind, and when I looked back I saw pieces of my hair scattered on my classmates. At that point I knew that it was time to shave my head.

It all didn't seem real until I went to the hairdresser- and had my head shaved to size zero- came home, looked in the mirror and then it really hit me, that I'd lost all my hair, and there was nothing I could do about it.

I invented a story that the reason I was bald was because I decided to shave my head for fun- whether this was the right thing to do or not, I'm not sure- but it seemed like a better option at the time than explaining to my classmates that I was sick with a disease that I barely understood.



It hit my parents pretty hard, I think the hardest thing for them was that they wanted to help me, but they didn't know how or what they could do. Other than attempting some naturopathic solutions, my family and I decided not to attempt the classic Alopecia Areata treatments, as the success rate was low and we didn't want to risk possible future health implications.

I had to accept that I wouldn't have hair for the rest of my life. This helped me gain acceptance early on and not hang on the possibilities. Learning that there was nothing that could be done, I just had to get on with life. For me, this was for me the best thing.

I was always a sporty kid, but once high school was over I pursued sports more seriously- it empowered me with the feeling of being physically strong. That snowball of determination eventually led me into mountaineering, and competitive cycling. Having Alopecia Areata was a great advantage in the sporting world as it meant I never had to shave my legs, was more aerodynamic in the pool and on the bike. It also meant I never had to worry about my body hair getting caught in lycra- which I hear can be a painful experience.



One of the greatest things about Alopecia Areata is the momentum of self determination and motivation it builds. In the beginning it appeared like it closed many doors (friends, future job prospects, girlfriends etc), but in actual fact I believe it opened them up further. Of course I am very lucky and grateful to my friends who stood by me through these tough times to allow me to see this.

Alopecia Areata tested me, and allowed me to see what I am capable of, it taught me how initially what may be perceived to be a negative situation is actually a positive one that can change our lives for the better. Alopecia Areata has never stopped me from pursuing my dreams, if anything it has helped give more meaning to my life, as Winston Churchill once said "kites rise highest against the wind- not with it".

James Miller

www.aaaf.org.au



Australia Alopecia Areata Foundation Inc.

Alopecia Areata
.....it's life changing