

Lisa....After a lifetime of taking my blonde locks for granted, it was such a shock to completely lose my hair

I have read so many heart warming (and heart rending!) stories about children with this condition and especially how they cope with it in the presence of peers. My story is a little different as I did not lose my hair until my early fifties.

After a lifetime of taking my blonde locks for granted, it was such a shock to completely lose my hair over just a few months. It was truly a part of my identity just cruelly snatched away. I really grieved. There was the initial shock and disbelief followed by fear of the actual medical condition and what else might transpire, especially as the loss seemed to be triggered by a thyroid virus which lasted for a couple of years and made me quite ill. I eventually recovered from the virus but to this day, 7 years later, suffer from Alopecia Universalis. I make no secret of the fact that I have spent countless hours internet trawling searching for explanations and cures, especially when it comes to diet and the autoimmune connection. I have also been through the customary round of visits to naturopaths, dermatologists and 'hair loss specialists', quietly but desperately seeking answers.

In the first few years I bought and wore some synthetic and very uncomfortable wigs. They made me itch and I was always worried that they would move or come off. They were over shiny and then within months became dull and for want of a better word, 'wiggly'. In retrospect, I would have been happier wearing some beautiful and decorative head scarves or turbans instead.

My turning point with wigs came in 2012 when my darling husband bought me my first suction based human hair Freedom Wig from Angel Wigs. This was a revelation. After much trepidation, in part due to cost, I was fitted by Angela and eventually received my first 'real' wig just before my youngest daughter's wedding in March 2012. It was such a relief to be able to wear something that closely resembled my own hair, to be a happy 'mother of the bride' and to be myself again. My confidence felt restored and these wigs continue to be my main solution to my hair loss. To be able to walk out of my home and have 'normal hair' takes the stress out of dealing with my condition. It stays put without any concerns if I am hanging upside down in my yoga class or even if I choose to wear it in the surf. Having said all of this it has also given me the confidence to explain my hair loss 'as I go'. It's not something I completely hide from the world, in fact most of my family and friends are familiar and comfortable with my hair loss and are used to seeing me without hair or scarves or beanies. A snug silicone cap is never going to feel as good as a soft cotton or wool beanie, or a totally bare head when it's hot, but having the choice to wear hair or not matters to me, as I know that I will never be the person who can confidently walk into a room full of strangers with a bald head. I know there are Alopecia sufferers out there who happily do just that but I suspect there are just as many like me who don't.

It has certainly taken time to accept and ultimately embrace my condition but having the choice to wear a good wig has helped immensely. However, the understanding of friends and family has been just as integral to this process. My husband, mother, sisters, nieces, nephews and friends have all encouraged and enjoyed my choices of headwear and wigs. They too shared my initial grief and shock but also the relief of finding that other than having no hair, I am fit and healthy. As for the women in my life, well they are actually a bit envious of the fact that I never have to worry about 'doing my roots', having regular trims or waxing or shaving!

The more recent addition to my life of four grandchildren has presented a few challenges in explaining why I have no hair but they do. They all call my wig 'Nanna's hair hat' and know that I usually pop it on before we go out. My three year old grand daughter Giselle has been especially curious. A few weeks ago when I was staying with her and we were snuggled up on my bed reading a book she decided to check out my bald head under my beanie. She pushed the beanie back, smoothed my head with her hand and then leant over to kiss it, except that instead she 'blew a raspberry' on top of my head! We ended up rolling around giggling together on the bed with her patting and kissing my head. Innocence, comfort, acceptance - Alopecia embraced.

