

**Michelle....Sharing this
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My Alopecia Story . Michelle , Sydney.

It has been 20 years since I sat my HSC in 1994, and 20 years since I developed Alopecia at age 17.



My friends noticed the first bald spot when we were away together after finishing our exams. My beautiful, thick, shoulder length auburn hair began to fall out rapidly after that. At a time when the world should have been exciting and full of possibilities, it felt like it was closing in on me. As one treatment after another failed, I became very anxious, withdrawn and depressed. I was very self conscious and had little confidence, especially with guys. I used to think " What if no one ever accepts me?" "What if I never marry?" " What if I don't have children?" I had always wanted to marry and have a family. I used to wear bandanas, scarves , and hats , and keep what little hair I had cut short and wispy around my ears.

Most of my hair regrew when I was 21, and for 6 months I didn't need a head covering. But alas it started to fall out again. This time I decided to try a wig. My first wig was a synthetic blend and very itchy. The lady in the wig shop directed me to the Alopecia Support Group in Sydney. It was there I found out about human hair suction wigs. Then and there I decided I wanted one. I had always been a busy, people oriented person before Alopecia and I saw this as an opportunity to reclaim my life. Once I had a suction wig, I began swimming, going outdoors more, exercising, and socializing again. I felt more able to focus on others and forget myself!

I finished my childcare diploma at TAFE, and I started working at a school for disabled children, which also helped me to gain more perspective on my "problem". I travelled to Lebanon and Africa with a friend, where she taught English and I cared for the children of refugees whilst they attended English classes. I returned home with a zest for life! Within a year, I was married to a gorgeous African man, whom I had known in Sydney before travelling.

Uche is not fazed at all by my Alopecia- in his culture, women wear wigs all the time! That was 13 years ago. God has blessed us with 4 beautiful daughters who are the joys of my life. They are 10, 8, 4 and 9 months old. I still shave my very patchy hair every day, and wear suction wigs most of the time, because I feel most confident in them.

I now tell lots of people about my Alopecia, and how I have learned to overcome depression and anxiety. Sharing this "secret" with friends, means they often feel safe to confide in me, and sharing our issues has strengthened our friendships. Alopecia is now just a small part of my full and busy life!

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