

## **Anthea — I have learnt there is no need to feel sorry for yourself about what you don't have**

My life as a little innocent girl with alopecia was tough. I lost all my hair when I was 6 years old. My mum decided to get me a wig but when I would play on the monkey bars, it would fall off, leaving me humiliated in front of other kids as they would ask me where my hair was. I simply answered I don't have any, so from then on I refused to wear one.

During primary school I regained some hair but still had lots of patches all over my head, so I wore a scarf. My confidence was at an all-time-low. I became very quiet and shy. I didn't really look at people when I was spoken too, as I feared they would comment on my lack of hair – or worse, be teased.

In high school I hung out with what you would call the “in crowd” as they went to all the parties. It was an outlet for me as I would ride myself off on alcohol which became a comfort for me and gained me a little more confidence that I longed for.

I was lucky to meet my now husband when I was 15 years old. He helped me become the person I am today. He brought me out of my shell in so many ways but I still had many insecurities. I became jealous of other girls that looked good, as in my head I could never look as good as them. They looked normal and complete.

At 25-years-old, my alopecia turned into universalis. I watched my hair fill the drain of the shower and cover the bathroom floor it happened so quickly. I lost everything - not only my hair this time, but my eyebrows and my eyelashes, complete body hair.

That shattered me.

I kept thinking, “Why me? How much more do I have to go through? Why is god so determined to take away any beauty from me? Does he want me to look ugly so no one looks at me?”



## Anthea —

It was so hard to look at the face staring back at me in the mirror. It was so bare and so unattractive to me. I wanted to look like anyone but me. I had no choice but to purchase a synthetic wig. It used to slip all over the place and never felt secure. As I continued through my adult years, I finally got my first real human hair wig which gave me a whole new lease of life. It looked like I had real hair.

I live with my husband who I have been with for 25 years and we have two children together. Our boy, Max who is 4 years old, suffers from autism. Because of what I went through, I will never let him feel different to anybody else. I make an extra effort to boost his confidence every day because I know first-hand what it is like to go through life not feeling confident and good about yourself. I also have a beautiful 2-year-old daughter Olivia.

I now live as a 39-year-old woman with alopecia universalis. I wish every day I had hair, eyelashes and eyebrows especially, but I know I will probably never get them back. I am a much stronger person for it and have learnt to deal with the cards I have been dealt. Hearing my kids say "Don't forget to put your hair on!" before we go out makes me laugh. Both of them telling me I am beautiful with or without hair makes me smile every time. I have learnt there is no need to feel sorry for yourself about what you don't have and how you look but to be a healthy, fit and a genuine person as it has so much more worth.

