

Michelle — I realized that even with Alopecia, I could make a difference in the lives of others.

Alopecia Areata began for me as a small patch at the back of my head at age 15, in 1992. It progressed slowly until the year following high school, when at age 18, I lost most of my head hair for the first time. As my hair decreased, so did my mood and my confidence, while my dreams and goals went down the drain along with the lost strands. I gradually became severely anxious and depressed over the next couple of years. I wore hats and scarves to cover my patchy head, and dreaded talking about my AA.

I withdrew into my shell and lost interest in the things I loved- travelling, swimming, snorkelling, being with people, helping people. I felt that no man would ever love me or accept me once they knew about my AA. I had always wanted to be a mum, and I felt this dream was now hopeless. I hated my appearance and felt so limited by my alopecia. I desperately needed help for myself, and searched for a support group.

At the first Alopecia Support Group meeting I attended in Sydney in 1998 I met another young lady close in age to me, who was confident and had similar interests to me. She was wearing a suction based human hair wig, and she showed me how it worked as she enthusiastically told me about her upcoming travel plans. This experience opened up a realm of possibilities for me as I realized I could “reclaim” my life and appearance. I started the process of having a wig custom made, and started to change my thinking, one day at a time, from “I can’t cope with this”, to “I can accept this AA today”. Once I had my wig, I looked more like myself and felt able to accept my appearance again.

I stopped thinking about why I couldn’t travel and embarked on a 6 month trip with my friend Rebecca. We were sponsored by our friends, family and our church for much of the trip, as we volunteered our time and abilities, teaching in several needy countries, including Lebanon, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso. (West Africa). I realized that even with Alopecia, I could make a difference in the lives of others, who faced many more hardships in life than I did!



Michelle — Acceptance for me was the key to unlocking the AA prison I had created for myself.

I was truly blessed to have experienced love and acceptance from so many people who welcomed us into their homes and communities. I came back from this adventure with renewed confidence, as well as self – acceptance of who I am, and my unique abilities as an individual, to connect with children and people from all over the world. Suddenly, now that I accepted myself again, enjoyed my life , and actually smiled, I became attractive again, and found someone who also accepted me, alopecia and all !! But that’s another story J

These days, I still have AA. It now affects my brows, lashes and body hair too, but I have accepted it for today and as long as it sticks around. I’ve been married for 16 years and have 4 lovely daughters. I still love to be with people , I enjoy travelling with my family and friends , and I now love to reach out to others who have AA to help them accept their condition as well, knowing that acceptance for me was the key to unlocking the AA prison I had created for myself.

