

Elijah — Do the things in life that you want to do

As a 15 year old boy having half a head of hair can be rather challenging.

I first got Alopecia when I was six according to my mum, but I can't really remember having it until 3rd grade. Although it was 3rd grade when I realised I had it, it was never really a problem until 6th grade, when it got significantly worse after a family trip to the Sunshine Coast.

At this point I lost about 60% of my hair and for the first time was actually bullied for my Alopecia and began to wear a hood or a hat constantly. Although the bullying was put to a stop by my class teacher (a scary old greek guy) pretty quickly, I haven't really been in public without some sort of head covering since then. Constantly wearing a hood meant that although I knew it was unlikely, I was still paranoid of someone taking it off, which I think had some effect on my mental health.

However being forced (mentally) to constantly wear a hood hasn't stopped me from doing the things I love. For instance the year after my alopecia worsened I went on our school's annual trip to Japan for a fortnight. Although Japanese culture in my experience involves a lot of respect and taking off of things like shoes and hats before entering buildings, I found that most people there were quite accepting aside from a few grumpy old men at a Kyoto temple who wouldn't let me into a specific shrine due to my hat.

I've also been on several other pretty big school camps (my school really likes the outdoors). For instance a few years ago we went on a two week long camel trek in the Flinders Ranges and most recently we spent a week paddling up the Murray River in kayaks. Although this might have stopped some else in my position from going, it never really bothered me. I think this is in part due to the general supportiveness of my amazing classmates, who have never really been mean about my lack of hair, to the point where I can comfortably joke about it with just about all of them. I'd like to add that I've been in the class of people since basically kindergarten and have known some of them since I was a toddler or before which definitely helps. Compared to what I've heard from other kids my age on the annual alopecia camps, I've gotten off pretty lightly, never having to have moved schools or change classes. This has contributed greatly to my overall wellness with Alopecia. The thing I would probably be most afraid of at this point would be moving schools.



Elijah — I now have the most confidence I've ever had

I generally hate having attention drawn to my Alopecia. Having to explain my condition is a nightmare. I don't like feeling like I have special privileges, like always being able to wear a hood/hat.

Id like to say that the Alopecia camps are a huge help. But in a funny way, instead of feeling accepted or whatever, I end up kinda feeling like I shouldn't be complaining about my Alopecia. There are other people who have it a lot worse than me and who have been forced to move schools countless times or have been bullied a lot more than I ever was.

As far as my mental health goes I think Alopecia might have even been beneficial in some ways, since I've never really been that sad about my lack of hair and have just got on with life. Its been harder for me than it is for most of my classmates and people at my age in general, but I am stronger I think. As a side note my hair has grown back over the past two years, to the point of me only having 1-2 patches at a time and to quote my 4 year old sister "Lijah... your head's all fuzzy!". I still wear a hat or hood all the time though.

What I'd like to say to anyone my age struggling with Alopecia is don't let it get to you and do the things in life that you want to do, even if it means your alopecia causes you some discomfort.

