

Michelle — Having alopecia has certainly been a rollercoaster of emotions for me.

My name is Michelle and this is my story.

I was first diagnosed with alopecia areata in September 2000. After only a couple of months I went from having one small 20 cent size patch of hair missing to losing all my hair, eye brows and body hair.

Having alopecia has certainly been a rollercoaster of emotions for me.

First, I was absolutely terrified, ashamed and embarrassed to go out in public and as time progressed I started to really hate myself. I hated looking in the mirror and didn't feel attractive or feminine looking without my hair. I was very distressed when one of my closest friends at this time wouldn't even drink out of the same glass as me in fear that she may catch what I have and lose her hair. Many, many days I would cry and wonder why me?

It's now been 18 years without my hair and even though I still suffer a lot of anxiety issues, I am learning to love myself again. 3 years ago, I had my eyebrows tattooed on and it took me quite sometime to adjust to how I looked with eyebrows again but now I absolutely love them.

I have several wigs and when I wear them everyone comments on how real they look. I am very fortunate to have the support of my beautiful family and friends as I could not have survived the past 18 years without them.

I also suffer from some sort of autoimmune disease along with the alopecia which causes frequent illness but the support I'm always receiving from my friends and family help immensely.

Just surrounding myself with close friends and family gave me the courage this year to post a photo of myself on fb without my wig and just wearing a beanie. This was the first photo in 18 years since losing my hair that I had the courage to post online.



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Another huge help to me has been my beautiful fur babies, Mocha, Mahli and Tammy. Tammy unfortunately passed away earlier this year but my beautiful dogs have always been so loyal, full of cuddles and non-judgemental.

My niece and nephew also have added to my boost in confidence as only being 5 & 6 years old and they always remind me that even though I don't have hair, they think I'm beautiful and love me.

This year I have taken up gardening which I find not only rewarding but relaxing.

I honestly think that once I realised how much I really hated myself because of the way I looked and felt inside that I needed to do something, and I promised myself this year is my year. I'm going to put myself as a top priority and work on myself, my confidence and my happiness. I have always been so anxious about keeping everyone else happy that I forgot about myself.

So now with my confidence growing, my new tattooed eyebrows and promise to make myself number one, I am starting to be happier and healthier. I am still a work in progress, but I believe positive thinking helps a lot.

