

Hi,

Thanks for taking the time to read this. I don't really like to ask for help, and I appreciate your consideration when reading this.

In late 2015, I started to notice some weakness in my left arm. I'm fairly active and lifted weights routinely (2-4 times per week), so some slight weakness didn't necessarily seem out of place. Could have been a slight strain or just fatigue, so I wrote it off and pushed through continuing to work out. I lifted until February of 2016. One day, I woke up and my back was a little... twingy (?); completely separate from the arm, but that will make sense later. Again, I didn't really think much of it. I've battled back issues most of my adult life. But this was a little different; it continued to get worse throughout the day. I still pushed through and did my normal work for that day. I got home that evening and took a shower. When I got out, I could barely stand. I was sliding around my bedroom on my hands and knees gathering my clothes.

The next morning the pain was unbearable. I had barely slept and could hardly focus. I called in sick from work and tried to rest. That didn't work. It's hard to describe how horrible this was. The only relief I could get was a handful of painkillers and sitting on the edge of my couch. After 2-3 days of this, I finally had a prescription for an anti-inflammatory. This took the pain away but didn't solve the problem, because I now had no strength in my left foot. I got connected with a neurosurgeon who told me I needed surgery for a bulged disc and a second herniated disc. A month from the day the pain started, I had surgery; that was March 8, 2016.

There was a lot of stenosis (bone spurs) surrounding the nerves, and I ended up having to lose half of my facet joint. But the surgeon was happy with his work and thought everything went well, and it did. I was home that night and rested that whole week. I was working from home the following week, more like sleeping, but watching my email in case I needed to do something. Everything seemed normal; now, looking back, I had dropped a lot of things. Water bottles, phones, food just randomly, but all with my left hand. Just coming off back surgery, I was high all the time from the painkillers and muscle relaxers, and I didn't really think too much about the drops.

I started physical therapy in late April or early May. I was already back at the gym working on my own recovery, but they gave some great tips on different things to do and to look for. I started noticing that my left hand wasn't quite reacting like I had become accustomed to, so I mentioned it to the therapist. She referred me to the hand specialist in the office. They did some tests, and I was given some play to do and some exercises to do. I went back several months later, sometime in early September. They re-tested and she said we should probably talk to my surgeon again. I set up an appointment with him. He did some physical tests and ordered an MRI for my neck/shoulder area. I'm thinking, *great a second back surgery this year. At least it's this year and I'm way over my out-of-pocket, so it's free.* MRI comes back clear and my surgeon says that the issue I'm having would only come from up my spine not down. So he wants to do an MRI on my brain. I work it out in my head to be brain cancer. We go out of town over the weekend and the whole time I'm just like, "I got brain cancer." I try not to think about it, but that's a tough one to forget. Get home and meet with doc on Tuesday. Brain scan was clear. He didn't have any further options and refers me to a neurologist. He tells me that they are normally booked out a few months, but they would contact me to schedule. I get a call that day with an appointment for Thursday. She looks me over and has a conversation with me about ALS. Follow-up appointment the week after, and some crazy test of getting stabbed with needles and flexing muscles to create sound

waves for the doc to see. She formally diagnoses me with ALS. That was September 28, 2016. What's worse than brain cancer, right?

I've been praying for a miracle ever since. Looking back at my timeline and listening to other people's stories. I know that God played a role in helping me see the docs I needed to see and getting to the root issue right away.

What does it mean to have ALS? Statistically, the average lifespan is 2-5 years with less than a 10 percent chance of reaching 10 years. My hands and arms have continued to decline. I couldn't lift a gallon of milk straight out in front of me. Trying to button a shirt is beyond me at this time. I've had to modify all of my daily habits, but I am still self-sufficient for the most part. My speech has started to slow down and is sometimes slurred. I am currently looking at remodeling my home to become more prepared or simply moving to a home that I would only need to make small changes to. None of this is really that difficult to cope with and push through. What is tough is knowing that there is nothing I can do to get better. There is no cure or miracle diet that is going to restart my body and regenerate my nerves. The best out there are some drugs that, hopefully, will slow the progression of this disease. This is completely out of my control. I am helpless against it. The other part that is tough is knowing that my time is extremely limited, and I can't say I love you enough to my friends and family.

At this point I ask for a few things:

God is – believe that.

Love everyone, even if they are hateful and rude to you.

Beauty is everywhere, but you have to find it, please look.

Don't be in a rush to have more experiences when you may not have fully grasped the one you're in.

On November 10th, Idaho Pizza Company will be donating 20% of its sales to the local MDA. Proceeds will be split 50/50, with half going to research and half going to help locals living with ALS.

Please join me in supporting this great cause.

Together we can end ALS. God bless!