

Testimony

Katie

My name is Katie, and I am 19 years old. I got sick with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome when I was in 8th grade, and my health gradually worsened over the next few years. By my junior year in high school, I was mostly homebound. I had to leave a school that I loved, and receive tutoring at home instead. I could only do schoolwork for about an hour a few days a week. I have daily headaches, dizziness, poor sleep, exhaustion, and severe chemical sensitivities.

Before I got sick, I loved to sing and act. I was a member of two choirs and music groups, and I played the lead role in several drama productions. I used to play soccer, and go hiking, biking, and skiing. Now, I cannot walk around the block without becoming exhausted.

During my first two years of high school, I used to wake up at 5:45 every morning, carpool the ½ hour to school, be in school from 8 to 2:30, participate in many extracurricular activities, and get home around 5:30 pm, when I would start into a couple hours of homework.

Now, I wake up at 9:30 or 10 am, and I rarely get going before noon. I have about 2-3 hours of energy for light activities every day. I read, go on short walks, volunteer at a day care two days a week, and take two college courses at a local university.

I want to be a kindergarten teacher. But I know that at the rate I'm going, it will take me another 7 years to graduate from college. I catch every cold and virus that goes around. I would probably only be able to work a few days a week for a couple hours.

I am lucky. I know there are people with this illness who are sicker than I am. At least I can function for part of the day.

I have a supportive and loving family. My immediate family understands this illness because both of my siblings, my mom and my aunt are all struggling with it. If we were able to make the trip to Washington without compromising our health, our t-shirts would read as follows:

Me: sick for 6 of 19 years My sister: sick for 10.5 of 21 years My brother: sick for 5 of 16 years My mom: sick for 10 of 49 years My aunt: sick for 25 of 42 years
Let's make this be the last year. Please help in any way you can. Our family has been devastated by this illness. It's time to get our lives back!

Sincerely, Katie