

Coping Mechanisms

My Team!

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As a young boy, I remember my father and mother teaching me about the importance and value of "teamwork."

Since I can first remember, I have always known that I am not alone in this world; i.e. I am not an "island unto myself." My parents taught me to always make sure that I had a "good team" around me. Whether it was in Little League Baseball, the church basketball team, a science project in school, or a personal problem or challenge, I was taught to always seek the aid of a strong support team.

That life-lesson of teamwork has been of inestimable value to me since my diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis.

It wasn't long after my neurologist said: "John, you have MS" that I began dealing with this challenge of living with MS in terms of the concept of teamwork!



Well, I am certain that you all would agree with me that what is shared between you and your significant other is private. Those thoughts, emotions and feelings that you experience in your walk with MS are shared mainly with your spouse/significant other, and are meant to be and remain very private.

In my early days of my MS, I am sure that I was "numb", i.e. I was unable to react or respond to the shock of being diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. So, I really did need a coach to enable me to get on quickly, to help me get on the fast track in living with my MS.

Without my wife, my coach, my personal game with MS would have been chalked-up in the lost-column long ago.

Now, continuing on with my analogy of living with MS as a "team concept," we come to the "quarter-back," the "front Line," i.e. the "guards" and "tackles," the "ends" or "receivers," and, finally, let us not forget the "cheerleaders!"

Well, I'm sure that you have realized that the "quarterback" would be the person with MS. You and I are the ones who are carrying the load, if you will, to win the game. No one else can take the responsibility of making the call, whatever that call or decision might entail.

Now, the "front line" in the game of football is made up of the "guards" and the "tackles." In my analogy of MS and teamwork, the "front line" would be the "ABC and RN's."

Next on the team are the "ends". In the game of football these are the "receivers," or the guys who catch the ball! And, in my living with MS, I like to think of my receivers as those to whom I throw my problems such as anger and stress, when they become a little too much for me to handle.

And, in this area I have several people on my team. They might include such people as my pastor, priest, rabbi, or clergy-person; a good psychiatric counselor; a stress management consultant; or, even a very good friend who is willing to really listen.

These "receivers" are the persons who are there for me to help handle any stressful situation or problem, which at the time may seem a bit too overwhelming.

Last, and certainly by no means the least, are our "cheerleaders"! As we all know, any good game, or challenge needs to have good cheerleaders, i.e. someone to cheer you on as you face your challenge; someone to encourage you as you live-out your day-to-day life with M.S.

Now, the cheerleaders can be, and usually are, a variety of different people. In my walk with MS, my cheerleaders have been, first and foremost, my older brother who also has MS; secondly, my first-rate neurologist (who is the best MS specialist in my local area); The National Multiple Sclerosis Society; my local MS support group (which meets monthly); my close friends who are also living with MS; the nurses in both my neurologist's office and my personal care physician's office; the members of my home church who support me with their prayers; and last but not least, good friends who live both close and far away; and, many others of whom I may not even be aware.



You see, friend, you may have this mountain of a challenge called Multiple Sclerosis now facing you. You may have just been told that you have to come up with a new "game plan." But, you do not have to play the game alone!

You have any number of team players who are standing by and are ready to be called off the bench to help you win your daily walk with MS.