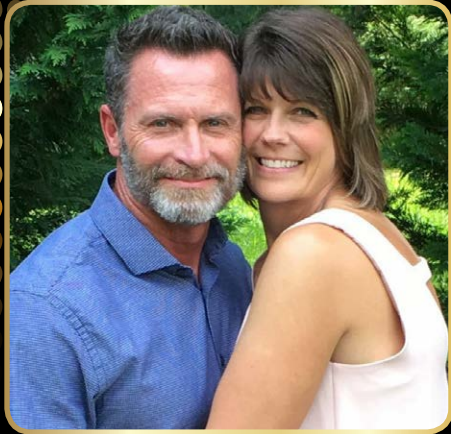


2017 Best Self Atlanta Magazine Courage Award Finalist

DENIS AVANS

BEFORE



AFTER



Courage is a big and important word. It's a characteristic that we all share in some way. Just as a MLB player has to have courage to bat against a pitcher throwing 95 mph at him, it takes just as much courage for a person with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) to walk up or down a flight of stairs. MS is a chronic progressive disease that affects the central nervous system (brain, spinal cord, and optic nerves) and is potentially disabling. In 2012, I was diagnosed with MS.

I was recently asked by a fellow MSer, how was I able to do all that I do? It made me think. When I learned of my diagnosis, I was really terrified and running low on courage. The thought of becoming disabled was a huge blow to my life. See, I'm a proud fitness fanatic. How was I going to be able to be active in my kid's

lives and exercise in a wheelchair? I was frightened of the unknown.

The first year was really tough, but as I began getting a grasp on my new MS life, I started making some small movements forward and gaining a little courage. I firmly believe that the consistent, smart exercise plan I follow is the reason I has been able to maintain a high level of fitness.

Today I'm a full-time fitness professional and I train patients with chronic diseases and other neurological conditions at a dedicated neurology center. Sure, the daily thought of MS and the unexpected are always there, but I've learned to take it one day at a time and be grateful for the little things. Life is too short to worry about the things I can't control.

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