

## **Julie Palich has been living with multiple sclerosis since 2011**

Julie is a wife, mother, daughter, friend, professional, and someone who has been living with multiple sclerosis (MS) for seven years. She was living in Canada with her husband and three-year-old son when she started having sharp pains and hazy vision in her left eye.

It took a while to receive her diagnosis of Relapsing Remitting MS (RRMS) as there were minimal signs of the condition. The uncertainty was the most disconcerting thing, as she was used to being in control of her life. Her future suddenly seemed like it could turn out very different.

Julie had heard of MS but didn't know much about the condition. "I had no real concept of what life with MS entailed. I remember researching online whilst waiting for further tests in the emergency room, and slowly I was able to start understanding what might lay ahead of me," Julie said.

When the Palich family decided to move back to Perth, she got in contact with MSWA to seek advice on treatment and support services. Julie said, "MSWA have been really supportive to both me and my family. We know that when I need help, they will be there for me. As the largest financial contributor to MS research in Australia, I support and appreciate all the fundraising done by MSWA because it provides me hope that a cure might someday be found."

Telling her family and friends was stressful because she didn't know how people would respond, but over time she's become more confident in explaining her condition. After her diagnosis, Julie took proactive measures to give herself the best chance of managing her symptoms through medication and changes to her diet and lifestyle. So far, this approach has been successful, and she has had no further episodes or degradation since her initial diagnosis.

"I still have slightly reduced peripheral vision out of my left eye and sometimes when I'm tired it will also feel weak and weary. My adrenal system went out of whack for a while, but I now understand my personal triggers for this and know how to manage it," Julie said.

One symptom that Julie wasn't expecting was anxiety. The pressure of living with a life-long condition that had no cure was initially extremely difficult. However, through meditation and positive thinking, she has been able to manage the impact and now believes that the uncertainty people with MS face really is no different to the uncertainty everyone lives with.

Today, Julie believes she is healthier than at the time of her diagnosis. Only two weeks before her first symptoms, she had ordered a new road bike and was looking forward to competing in some races. For months she was unable to ride it. "Now every time I get on my bike it reminds me that I have to keep pushing myself for as long as my life allows me to. Last year I completed my first 100km MSWA Ocean Ride in a personal best time," she said.



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Agreeing to be an MSWA Ocean Ride Ambassador was a big step for Julie. It meant admitting to a much larger group of people that she has MS.

“I made the decision to accept this opportunity because I want to help increase awareness and show others that you can lead a positive life with the right support around you. Last year I was amazed by all the people who rode alongside me and volunteers who cheered me on from the sidelines for this cause. I’m already training for this year’s race and can’t wait to ride for MSWA again in November,” Julie said.