

Simone Callanan's Story

It was March 2017, when Simone noticed that her right shin and calf muscle started to go numb. Seeking medical advice, she was assured it was probably just a pinched nerve. The numbness spread. "I couldn't walk without assistance and I had to go down the stairs on my bum as my balance had disappeared" said Simone.

After weeks of medical opinions, Simone consulted a neurologist. "Dr Ghia did every test imaginable, but had said from the start he thought it was the onset of MS. I thought, he's wrong. MS wouldn't happen to me!".

Dr Ghia was correct. Treatment quickly commenced and, within two days of receiving anti-inflammatory steroids, the feeling in Simone's feet started coming back.



The diagnosis was impacting. Simone said "I was very unsure at first. Would I end up in a wheel chair? Will my partner still want me? Will I be able to do my job? I couldn't even type properly, because of my frozen hands."

Before MS, Simone admits she had taken her health for granted. "I have a very busy job working in events, I had no work life balance. I wasn't going to the gym or eating healthy. I was drinking too much and scraping by on minimum sleep most nights."

Simone had mixed responses from family and friends. "Dad's thoughts revolved around the question 'why my daughter?'. He turned to his church for support and prayer. Mum, after hearing of better management through diet, went into overdrive stuffing me full of salmon, avocado and turmeric. Thanks Mum! My sisters' first response was 'OK, so how do we fix it?', and then a couple of weeks later burst into tears at her friends' BBQ. My partner was so supportive and caring. I had never seen him cry, before my diagnosis. He was the rock I needed to push me when I felt like giving up, when my legs wouldn't work, forcing me to go for walks and sit in the park in the sunshine. He is the best."



Simone's MS journey has seen much self-discovery. She is a big advocate of natural therapies, going back to work, keeping a healthy body and busy mind.

"I have since done my teacher training in Yin Yoga. I recommend it to anyone with MS or any autoimmune disease."

Hard to accept for Simone was that she couldn't eat cheese anymore! "As soon as I eat dairy, I have numb hands the next day and feel worse".

Aside from lingering symptoms of numbness and tingling, Simone's function and mobility came back 95%, which she credits, mainly, to her changes in lifestyle. "I was even able to complete the 'Step Up for MSWA' raising just over \$5,500 across my two teams!"

Simone first heard of MSWA through her Dad buying tickets in the MSWA Home Lottery. “Currently, my condition is stable. I am working full time and don’t need a lot of services. I have used MSWA’s massage facility and physio. It’s re-assuring to know that MSWA is there any time I need, especially the nurses, to talk through my concerns.”

Simone hopes, with more training, to use her yoga to help others with MS. “My body is responding with treatment and other natural therapies. I feel healthier, in a way, than before my diagnosis.”

As an MSWA ambassador, Simone has supported the MSWA Annual Dinner Auction in 2017 and 2018 through her work with the Campari Group. She participated in the 2018 Step Up for MSWA and is stepping up again in 2019.



“Once you realised the value of your working legs, climbing stairs becomes exciting! I enjoy the fundraising. MSWA is such a great cause and I’m stepping up to look out for my future self, and others.”