

Muriel's Story

I was emotionally drained and broken-hearted during that period in 2014 when I was first diagnosed. I was helpless and confused, however as time progressed, I developed some understanding of the disease and I somehow drummed up inner strength and courage to become mentally and physically strong to carry on with the treatments.

By having a positive mind-set, together with the help of my medications, I laid a path of independence to focus on my well-being and to a healthier frame of mind, instead of worrying about the condition and being sad about it.

It helped me to get back to positive thinking; not getting angry, and being kind to myself, gave me a better understanding of how to through the changes and handle them better. Most days I was in pain, my whole body ached; it was sometimes unbearable. Despite the painful days, I discovered that there is a way of dealing with it by staying focused and being calm.

I worked very hard; I did my exercises every day; I wanted to have my mobility back. Once again, I was determined to work through the process and fought tooth and nail for the opportunity to be back on my feet walking.



Months later I was strong enough to return to the gym on my own, with the help of two crutches. I also resumed Pilates fitness classes and gentle boxing sessions on Saturday mornings. It was beautiful to be back in class, it felt as if I had never been away. Everyone was glad to see me and admired my courage of attending the class with two sticks and it gave me the confidence to continue to attend classes. Despite being in pain, I carried out my exercises; the training made me feel alive and also the fact I was not stuck at home.

Another brave step I took during the recovery was attending my former secondary school's Thanksgiving Service in London while I was still relying on a zimmer frame. The event went very well and much to my surprise, it boosted my confidence and I felt brave enough to attend other events.

In 2017 during my recovery, I made a promise to return to Fiji if I was fit enough to travel alone for a break and also to engage in an educational community project. Interestingly, the dream came true a



few months later in 2018; I went on a trip to Australia and Fiji on my own. It was an incredible experience.

Until a cure is found for Neuromyelitis Optica, we have to live and work with the tools that are available; in my case working with my doctors, taking my medication attending all of my hospital appointments, having regular monthly blood test, a healthy diet and daily exercise, and most importantly, staying positive.