

Having lead a fairly active life up to the age of 40, I am now 64, had the regulation marriage, and divorced, no children. Owned my own house and fudged my way through a few jobs bringing enough cash to keep body and sole together, life was pretty good, then my dad died and the centre of my universe was no longer there.

My dad was like to most daughters, my friend and confidant. He fixed my house, mended my car, and gave me the love that only a dad can give to his daughter. I still miss him 24 years along the road, a road that within a few months of dad dying, found me in a wheelchair, then mainly confined to my bed for the next two years. Why, because my rheumatoid arthritis, which was diagnosed in 1974, just went out of control, my arms bent, my legs went stiff, which meant it got more and more difficult to get out of my power chair and onto my bed, so the easy option was to move my bed down stairs and stay on it, and that is just what happened to me.

I saw the seasons change from my bed by way of the reflection in a large picture on the wall opposite. That refecton came from the large bay window that was behind me and to my right. I did have a home help came in three times a day for an hour each time. Turning on the TV, putting lights on and off, answering my phone and front door was all controlled by a machine called a Possum Control; go to <http://www.possum.co.uk/> for more details.

My mom, who died a few years ago, use to come up from Birmingham to see me, seeing me like I was made her cry like any mom would, she felt helpless seeing her eldest daughter lying on a bed unable to move, disabled and dependent on others to meet all of her basic human needs.

I spent many hours alone, frightened and crying. I had the notion that I just wanted this existence to end as I could see no end to it. The only way I could see to end my life was by bashing my head on the brick wall which was next to my bed. I really did think that and tried it. I thought that by hitting my head on the stone wall I could cause a brain bleed and I would die. The only thing that knocking my head on the wall did was to give me a sore spot on my head and bad headaches, as 24 years down the line proved, I am still here.

One day I woke up, as we all do, and realised that the world outside my window and now alien to me, was not going to knock on my door, take me by my hand, pat me on my head and say "there, there Mary" and give me my old life back. I had to take back my life and control of it, stop feeling sorry for myself and do something about my situation; none else was going to do it for me.

My first step was to move to a bungalow and when I moved in I remember saying to the removal men as they unloaded the van, that my bed could go against that wall, pointing to a wall in my lounge, only to be reminded by my friend that I now had a separate bedroom. My mind was still in my old life.

I could now slowly see me taking my life back. I started to go out at first for short periods of time, remember I was in my comfort zone when I was in my bed. This getting my life back was not an easy journey and was a full 2 years before I was out of my bed all day. My care package was increased, so I was able to go to the city, do my own shopping, all of course with the help of a carer with me. The more I managed to get out, the more I wanted to do get out and do things, shopping for myself, and I love going to the theatre, live music concerts. The list was, and still is endless.

This as I have said, did not happen over night, I made it happen. I saw a door of my life open and I went through. I once again took charge and control of my own destiny.

Since getting my life back I could write a very long and boring list of what I have done since to take back control of my life. The main thing is I did it, not someone else.

So what about next year, 2012?

2012 is the year that the Olympics comes to the UK and I and my care team will be there as "Game Makers," for more details go to <http://www.london2012.com> .

So if you are sitting at home, waiting for life and social services to provide you with what ever you think your rights are you need to think again. If you are disabled or elderly, fed up, depressed, got no cash, then say to yourself what I can do to improve my lot. I say bang on a few doors, ask your own questions, get you own answers. There are many doors you can bang on, say let me in, and say I need some help, and ask your own questions.

If I may use the Church word, if you are a Christian or not, try out your local church, there is usually quite a community behind those closed doors, who knows what you may find there. You may or may not discover God but you may make some good friends. Try banging on any door to any organisation and you may well be surprised the help you will find. I still do bang on doors some 24 yrs in and I never cease to be amazed at what gifts and gems are offered.

I do have my good days and my bad days, we all do, but the bad days are few as I am now back in control my life, and will I go back to how things were, in the words of a good friend. "That is so not going to happen!"