

Linda's Story

LINDA: My name is Linda and I was diagnosed with lupus in 1986.

KERRI: My name is Kerri and I've been friends with Linda since 2000.

LINDA: Before the diagnosis, I felt like a mountain-climbing machine. I was out hiking, climbing mountains all the time with my friends, every weekend. We were weekend warriors.

What led up to my diagnosis was a series of what seemed to be non-related experiences. Painful joints, fevers, nausea even, and really being tired all the time. I actually sought going to a psychiatrist. I thought I was making myself sick because I was so depressed. So when I spoke to the doctor, she said, "No, those don't seem like depression symptoms." And it was pretty much right then where they identified I had lupus.

I felt extreme fear. Just shock. I knew a person who had lupus and everybody had said she's gonna die. And now I have it. So I was just scared to death.

I remember going to my college advisor, my professor, and telling him that I didn't know if I could stay in school, and he said, "Well, you should talk to this other professor over here. He has lupus."

And I was really surprised because I wouldn't have had a clue that he was sick. He served as a role model for me because it showed me that he could still have a profession while at the same time managing his disease.

KERRI: When I first found out that Linda had lupus, I immediately went on the Internet and looked up all I could because I wanted to understand so I could help support her. Linda is just overall an inspirational person in everything she does. She has the taekwondo school, she continues to give of herself continually. So she's just inspirational as she is and if you add lupus on top of everything that Linda does, it's just an amazing – she's an amazing human being.

LINDA: Kerri is my early warning system. She'll say, "Hey, are you feeling okay? You're looking kinda tired."

KERRI: I just keep an eye on how's she feeling, how's she moving, because Linda will push herself to the limit sometimes, and again, I like being the early warning system and say, "Hey, maybe you should just sit down for a minute," or "Can I get you something to drink?"

LINDA: You've definitely stepped in at moments when I have been at my worst in situations and just having you there to cheer me up and pump me up, or tell me to take it easy, has made a major difference, so thanks.

KERRI: Well, that's what friends are for!

