

Persha's Story

PERSHA: I'm Persha and I was diagnosed with lupus in 2003.

What led up to my diagnosis, I found that I was getting really tired, just very fatigued. Thought it was just because maybe I was just doing too much, playing too much sports, because I'm a very active person. And then, just out of the blue, I noticed that my ankles were swollen. And that was what led me to eventually go to the doctor.

Initially I was unaware of what lupus exactly was and what it meant. I wasn't sure how my husband would take it. What helped us was to pretty much just be straight up with each other. So I would try really hard to just help him to understand what I needed from him. And then he took on the role of educating me about what it was. He would look things up and he's very into eating healthy and just making sure that I exercise and stuff. He was my motivation with that.

Since having a child, I think my life has changed with lupus because it's not just about me anymore. In the beginning, I would admit, I didn't quite follow the treatment plan because I think I was still in the denial phase. But now I just feel like I have a lot to live for and my son is like my joy. I want to be around a long time for him.

Balancing being a mom with lupus is, is a big challenge. As soon as I walk in from work, my son, he's just so excited, and he's like, "Mama, Mama, let's play, let's play!" And some days, I can do it. But sometimes it just hurts, and I say, I say, "Baby, mama don't feel good." And then I'll show him where it hurts and he'll say, "Let me kiss it."

Sometimes I feel like bad I'm being a bad mom. But then I find other ways. He loves to read, so that's not very active. Or we'll find substitute things that don't exert so much energy. But, the next day I might feel better, so I feel like I make it up then.

I have a jewelry business. Handmade all by myself. From the moment I picked it up, I just loved it. While I'm doing it, I don't think about things that upset me, I don't worry, I'm not anxious. It's just, it's really my therapy.

I have, um, pieces that would symbolize lupus--either a butterfly, the color purple, a circle, a loop. So I donate a portion of the proceeds to the Lupus Foundation of America.

My hopes for the future is pretty simple. I want to appreciate what I do have.

And I want to be an advocate. I am a very positive person and, um, a very faithful person and that has been my foundation. And as much as I could do to help other people with lupus, and to help encourage and inspire and help promote hope, I feel good doing that.

