



# Meet - Melissa Cook

Wyoming, USA

When were you diagnosed with MS? July 1996

What type of MS do you have? Relapsing-Remitting MS (RRMS)

## #1: Can you tell us a little about your journey with MS. How did you feel about your initial diagnosis and how it has affected your life?

The news of my initial diagnosis was devastating and while my understanding of MS was limited, I was all too aware that the possibility of severe disability could be on my horizon. Despite this uncertainty, I pushed forward and achieved two master's degrees. I became a successful school district administrator and worked for 15 years in my career before ultimately leaving for medical disability.

## #2: What MS symptoms do you have and how do you manage them on a daily basis?

I've had so many different symptoms, it might be easier to say what I haven't experienced in 27 years. Nonetheless, I've learned to manage by prioritizing restful sleep, avoiding contact with ill individuals, minimizing my exposure to heat, and keeping my stress levels as low as possible.



## #3: Who/What has been your most important support system?

Without a doubt, my husband is the cornerstone of my support system. The medical disability benefits offered by the State of Alaska, coupled with their retirement plan, have been invaluable to me. This experience has underscored the importance of having disability insurance for individuals battling with MS.

## #4: Do you use any accessories like canes, walkers, or wheelchairs to manage daily activities?

I have several canes that I am happy to say are gathering dust these days.

## #5: How do you stay positive and motivated in your daily life? What do you do for self-care?

To maintain my health, I prioritize daily walks, and strive to maintain a healthy weight, all while avoiding triggers like stress, heat, illness, and insufficient sleep. My friend's tragic experience with breast cancer, diagnosed during her fourth pregnancy shortly after college, served as a profound wake-up call. Sadly, she lost her battle, but her story has motivated me to live each day to the fullest and make positive changes in my life, while I still have the opportunity. A recommendation led me to read Dr. Brandon Beaber's book on Post Traumatic Growth, which I found helpful.



I wrote my Alaska and multiple sclerosis memoirs "The Call of the Last Frontier" in 2021. My author page media link has a number of shows I've been on - <https://melissacook.us/media-computer.html>. You can also see how I live my life today on Wyoming Jeepers at <https://www.youtube.com/@wyomingjeepers/videos>.

## #6: Your story and experiences with MS are incredibly valuable and can provide encouragement and motivation to others in the community. What words of advice or encouragement would you give to someone who is newly diagnosed with MS or going through a challenging time right now?

Despite the challenges of an MS diagnosis, we're fortunate to live in an era where a variety of disease-modifying treatments are available. Moreover, research on the disease is constantly evolving, with promising developments such as genetic matching of medications on the horizon. With this in mind, it's important to remember that although life may be more challenging, it's still worth living to the fullest every day, as each day is a gift.

You can watch my MS story on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=daVbr61k0-s&t=5s>.

## #7: Have you started a business or mission related to MS? Can you tell us about it and what inspired you to take this step?

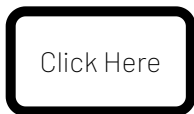
I have a blog called MSsymptoms.me. Our mission statement is: The mission of MSsymptoms.me is to provide hope to others. To inspire, encourage and educate. To expose the humor in living with MS symptoms. To recognize fear and face the darker sides of MS symptoms with strength and determination. To examine and then inform others on the latest research on multiple sclerosis.

MSsymptoms.me will enlighten family members, celebrate caregivers, and examine their MS symptoms. The site will help to improve the lives of those managing MS symptoms and their loved ones.

My goal is to discover more ways to overcome MS symptoms, provide insight into the daily life of an MS patient, and succeed at directing the course MS will take in my life and others.

Also, visit my website [www.melissacook.us](http://www.melissacook.us).

Want to become a part of the movement? Click the box below to order your gear!



Leave a comment, and share your experience. We would love to hear from you!