

## Functional Movement Disorder - My Personal Experience

I am a 43 year old woman, with a busy family life. I had a very busy year and for 2-3 months ran out of energy, and felt unlike my usual "hyper" self. I developed a headache that went right across my forehead. Over four days it got worse, and on the fifth day I woke it had spread to my neck, and on getting out of bed I found I wasn't able to walk properly.

I saw my GP within a couple of hours, and by then I was experiencing a spaced out feeling, a feeling of pressure from the roof of my mouth and my jaw would tremble. I then started to feel my head wobble, and my torso tremor. My walk got worse, with cramping feelings in my lower back, and a stiffness of my upper legs which made me drag a leg.

My partner and I were naturally worried that I had taken some sort of stroke. I was sent to a Medical Assessment Ward where I was promptly checked by various Dr's, and had tests including a CT scan which was clear. Within a few hours I was advised that they could not find any obvious cause for my now increasing involuntary movements of my legs and arms, torso jerks etc. I was asked to return four days later to meet with a neurologist for further consultation.

For two days and nights my symptom's persisted causing great anxiety to myself and my family. Particularly, as my movements were so unnatural and quite dramatic to look at. But they were not painful, and it was a more comfortable feeling to go with it than try to fight these jerks.

After some rest, by the third day my symptoms had lessened and an hour could pass where I was totally normal, and the headache would briefly disappear. On the fourth day I attended my appointment with the neurologist. On reaching the hospital ward my symptoms had returned in extreme. I now realised that walking any distance coupled with anxiety could bring my symptoms on.

After a thorough chat about my symptoms he concluded that I had a diagnosis of Functional Movement Disorder. I was over the moon to get diagnosed within four days of it all starting. He explained to me that whilst there was no organic cause or disease, my symptoms were very real. But with time the symptoms could all improve, which gave me great hope. He explained that I needed to focus on my periods of normal movements, and become less focused on my abnormal movements. With further discussion, and a leaflet to take home I left very positive. As I left the hospital my symptoms disappeared, and on arrival home I was perfectly normal again.

Having spent four days at home resting, not driving and shopping and all the other things I took for granted, I knew I was not going to let this movement disorder get

the better of me. After two days my confidence grew due to lack of symptoms and I went for a short drive. Driving proved easy as I was not focused on any abnormal movements. I continued out on short trips over the next oncoming days though my walking was a little slow to prevent the symptoms returning.

I went six days without any major symptom's, just the odd little head wobble. The next day I had a relapse but only for a matter of minutes brought on by strong emotions, when meeting some close friends.

I then returned to see the neurologist for a follow up appointment 11 days from onset of the disorder, and one week from diagnosis. I sat in the waiting area without the slightest twitch or tremor. I knew I was less anxious than my previous visit and was confident I would get to the appointment without recurring symptoms.

We discussed my very quick and positive progress. I have no doubt this has been due to a speedy diagnosis, and the way it was explained to me. The diagnosis was explained to me in such a way that I didn't think it was just 'all in my head' but I could make a positive impact with my attitude towards the disorder. The neurologist gave me the tools to go away and work on it before it got a grip of me, or my brain!

I am sure I will continue to progress in a positive manner though expect the odd relapse along the way.