

life.

AS TOLD
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Sarah, 20, was an
average sports-loving
teen, until an
unknown condition
almost ended her life.

My FEET were
AMPUTATED

I'll never forget the day it all started.

I was 14 and had to run during P.E. I was pumped. I didn't know much about fashion and wasn't good at flirting with boys, but I've always been super-active. This was my chance to shine. But shortly after I started running, I felt a sharp pain in my leg and I couldn't finish. Little did I know, it would be many years before I could attempt to run again.

My mum took me to the doctor, but he told me I was just having muscle spasms from running and that they were nothing to worry about. Not wanting to seem like a wimp, I went to school the next day and tried to act like everything was normal when I was actually in a lot of pain.

Two weeks later, the pain moved from my leg to my lungs.

It was hard for me to walk or even breathe. Panicked, my mum drove me to the emergency room. It took six hours for the doctors to figure out I had blood clots; my lungs had filled with blood. The doctors were stunned. Blood clots were only supposed to occur in old people who sat around watching TV, not to

healthy, active girls like me. **In fact, in the past 20 years, every teen who has had blood clots has died.**

At that point, I couldn't breathe on my own and had to be hooked up to a respirator. The medications I was given didn't work. No-one knew what to do. One day, two doctors came into my room, looking solemn. One ushered my mum into the hall while the other stayed with me. Calmly, he explained that the blood had clotted so bad that no oxygen was getting to my feet, and the flesh

in my feet had died. **The dead flesh was poisoning my bloodstream, which was why I was having trouble breathing.**

"If we want to save your life, we need to do a partial amputation of both your feet," he said. "We're doing it tomorrow." Then he left, leaving me all alone to stare at the walls and try to understand what he was saying. Thirty minutes later, my mum came back and we both started

crying. **I only had a 50 per cent chance of surviving the surgery, so we knew it might be our last night together.**

My mum is a birdwatcher, and on the morning of my surgery, I told her that if I died, I would be reincarnated as a bird so she could always watch over me. The last thing I remember was holding my mum's hand and telling her to count down with me while the doctor put the "laughing gas" mask over my face. I didn't know if I would ever wake up again, but six hours later, I woke up in my hospital bed. Both of my parents were there.



"Did I get the amputations?" I asked them. Then, I lifted the covers and saw huge bandages on my feet. I just started crying. It's a horrible moment for me to think about. Instead of the cute, little toes I used to have, my dancer's feet now ended abruptly and looked stubby. Things I once took for granted, like walking or standing on my tiptoes, I simply could no longer do. After that, I fell into a deep depression. I was stuck in the hospital for two months until I was able to leave in a wheelchair. When I went back to school, a lot of my friends stopped talking to me because they couldn't deal with how depressed I had become. **It was hard for me to hang out with**



I WAS BULLIED FOR THREE YEARS

Rebecca, 18, was tormented and threatened, but stayed strong.

It started with name-calling. A girl at school, Emily*, would tell me I was fat, ugly and pathetic. I tried to ignore her, but it seemed like the harder I tried to let it go, the worse the bullying got.

It steadily became more intense. Then, early last year, I was invited to a friend's birthday party and Emily was invited too. At the party, she kept trying to come near me, but I kept walking away, not wanting to have anything to do with her.

As I left, Emily followed me, and when I got in my car, she tried to punch me through the car window! I was so scared,

them anyway. Instead of worrying about what I was going to wear to a party, I was busy trying to relearn to walk.

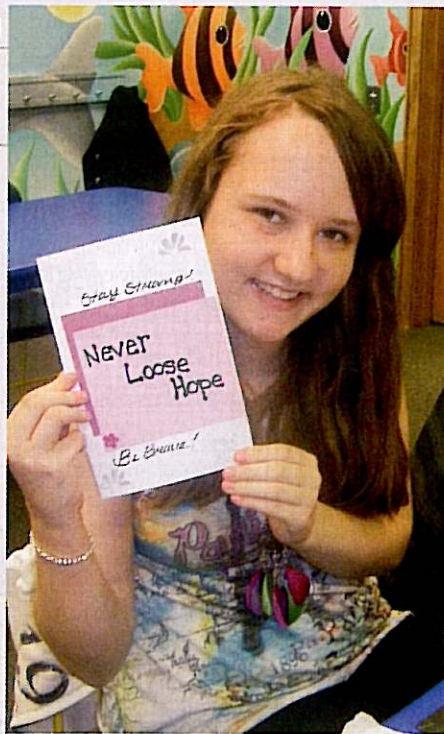
I had been working with a physical therapist to learn how to walk on my new stubby feet – my doctors believed I'd be able to learn how to walk without using prosthetics, but I wasn't too sure. I spent one year in a wheelchair

and one year on crutches. Then, one day, I took my first step, and then another. I walked over to my mum and poked her.

We both started crying and she screamed with happiness. It was a truly great moment. It took me a long time to get my confidence back. Since I couldn't do ballet or gymnastics anymore, I started drawing and discovered an artistic side to myself that I didn't know I had. At first, my amputations made me too self-conscious to try and make new friends, but now I've realised that if someone doesn't like me for who I am, they aren't worth getting to know anyway.

Now, most people can't look at me and tell I have amputations. I can walk, drive, and I love to go out. I'm trying to make up for all that time I spent relearning how to walk. I recently met a guy I really like and he didn't think my amputations were a big deal. Not many people

do. Instead of thinking of me as the girl with the amputations, my friends think of me as the girl who overcame so much.



I STARTED MY OWN CHARITY

Jen, 17, discovered doctors aren't the only people who can help sick kids feel better.

When I was 11 years old, my life changed forever when I began suffering from a poorly understood connective-tissue disorder. This disorder plagued my life with surgeries and treatments, which left me under constant stress because I was really uncertain about everything that was happening.

In February 2011, I was lying in the intensive care unit in hospital trying to recover from my 13th surgery. It was then

that I discovered how hard it was to be away from my friends and school – it was causing me almost as much pain as the surgery itself.

During that hospital stay, I received a card from a volunteer. That simple gesture meant so much and helped me regain hope during my time of need. I'll never forget the way I felt after that small act of kindness. Getting that card inspired me to create a non-profit charitable organisation called Cards for Hospitalized Kids (CFHK).

The charity began with a simple dream of giving hope, joy and magic to hospitalised kids, but it has turned into a national organisation that has given cards to over 5000 ill kids at more than 50 hospitals across the United States of America.

People from all over the country are involved with CFHK. Our volunteers include celebrities such as Lauren Conrad, who tweeted asking fans to get involved and got us an

additional 500 followers, and Cody Simpson, who got us 1000 extra followers!

It is hard to believe that a gesture as simple as a card can do so much good, but it

does. Seeing a picture of a child holding one of our cards with a huge smile, despite the fact that they are in a world of pain and suffering, is all the motivation it takes to keep this wonderful charity alive.

Our goal for 2012 is to give cards to 20,000 hospitalised kids. Doctors might provide the medicine to these sick kids, but we provide that little bit of hope and magic that'll go a long way.

To learn more about CFHK, visit cardsforhospitalizedkids.com.

but thankfully my friends came out and got her away from me.

After the party, I received a long, cruel message from Emily on Facebook, and that was it – I called the police. They suggested I block her from being able to contact me on the internet, so I did just that. I finally felt as if I was free from the bullying. Things went back to normal for a while after that and I didn't think of Emily anymore.

A few months later, I was invited to an 18th birthday party at a friend's house. I was told multiple times that Emily wasn't invited, but I saw her as soon as I got out of my car.

I wanted to leave, but my friends assured me that nothing was going to happen. I was still worried.

About half an hour later, she came back with her brother, his girlfriend and another guy. They surrounded me, and her brother came right up to my face and threatened to hurt me. He said he was sick of his sister complaining about me and that I was scum underneath his shoe. He said I deserved to be spat on. It was honestly one of the most awful things that has ever happened to me. He said he'd bash me if he ever saw me again. I ran inside with my friend.

Things died down after that and I didn't

have anything to do with Emily anymore, but the damage had already been done.

Because of bullying, I lost all my confidence and self-esteem, and I eventually started to believe everything she had called me over the past three years. But with all the support and words of encouragement from my family and friends, I've managed to keep my head held high and stay strong.

✘ I delete bullies

Untag Block Report