

I now know that dental problems are part of the syndrome with which I have been diagnosed. Along with this are all kinds of allergies, such as my allergy to latex but also to chrome and nickel, which dentists also often use. Until I was diagnosed, no-one could understand why I would always get itchy and come out in red blotches around my mouth after I'd been to the dentist.

Also, I often had a lot of pain when the anaesthetic wore off. I could sometimes still feel it weeks later. I once had a huge discussion with one of my ex-Dentists about this. In the end my Dentist won, of course; he said I was making it up. After that, I didn't have to have any anaesthetic unless it was totally necessary.

I try to have as much treatment as possible without the anaesthetic. But I am so lucky: my current Dentist is so up-to-date that she (a mother and about 30 years old) uses a kind of anaesthetic that doesn't hurt anywhere near as much as the old stuff did. As well as this, she also takes great care to consider my sensitivities and who I am. I hope that I can keep this Dentist – and her Dental Hygienist – for a very long time.

Thanks to them I now, finally, know how I can maintain my teeth and gums properly. I use toothpicks and floss, mouthwash with fluoride and a soft toothbrush with a small head. Green Paradontax is the only toothpaste that

is good for me. My gums no longer bleed, practically, and

I always have a lovely, fresh feeling in my mouth.

My Dentist only treats my teeth and gums if it is absolutely necessary and she always keeps my budget in mind, even when my insurance company will cover the cost of a crown. I've had crowns before and I always have to choose which type to have. This always works out fine: she is open to discussion and always finds the right solution for both of us.

– Difficulties with dominant types

People with loud voices give me the impression that they want to be overpowering. They let their presence be known and want to be the centre of attention.

Whilst on a course, I learned that what I'm feeling is a kind of jealousy of these people because, deep down, I want to be the one in the limelight.....

But still, that's not what I'm like. And I especially don't want to attract all of that unnecessary attention. My reaction is more: "Just act normally; you're mad enough as it is."

Some of these overpowering people make me feel very

small and when they talk to me – or should I say yell at me – I daren't say anything back. I daren't ask them any questions and I keep my questions to myself until I find someone who may be able to answer them for me.

I think it's a shame that people can't just act "normally". I know some people have a naturally loud voice. But still.... Some people let you know that they are there and they don't always need a loud voice to do this. I'm always very sensitive to the atmosphere in a room and know straight away if I feel comfortable there or not. What works best for me is to always protect myself against outside influences. But sometimes I forget to do that and then I'm tired out afterwards. This is just like hypersensitivity: I pick up on all the different emotions of the people around me.

What I can do about this is to stay on my own and listen to my own feelings. If there is somewhere else to go and stand in the room, I should go and stand there. If there is a way of avoiding a certain person, it's best if I do that. Otherwise it could turn into a disagreement and then I can't stop myself.

The disagreement can escalate in my mind and it only comes out when I'm on my own again. I have to filter out what I've thought up and split that off from what the real situation was. Can I get out of this? Can I stick up for myself? Can I think about myself and end the relationship with the person involved without offending them? Usually, the best thing for me to do is to set all of the reasons out in a row, by myself. That way I don't have to be scared that I'm taking on even more trouble. I'm not always the most tactful person with my choice of words...

– Difficulties with expressing feelings

Very often I find it difficult to find the exact words that I need to explain something. I'm thinking about too many things at the same time, including wondering about how the person I'm talking to will react to what I have to say. When I'm talking, if someone starts to look at me in a way that I'm not expecting them to, I can easily lose track of what I was talking about and then I find it very difficult to explain what I want to say in a steady, friendly way.

However, in the last few years, I have worked on this problem and have developed my skills so that I now dare to say a lot more than I used to. I've gained a lot of self-confidence by daring to be who I am. I am now more aware of the fact that what I do is fine. And more importantly: that other people have time for me.

Being able to express my feelings and being able to better express what is troubling me are things that I have learned through my boyfriend being open to it and giving me the chance to do it. Having dealt with a total of five miscarriages and broken relationships with previous partners – and my last break-up meant having to leave my lovely animals behind – he has very often had to be open to me wanting to get things off my chest. I would even scream out loud; I very often didn't know what else I could do. He even didn't mind if I would exchange my fine words for swearwords, but that's going a bit too far for me. I'm not really the type that swears.

Often I would just keep going on and on about something and he just let me get on with it. When I was done, he would introduce a sort of pause, sometimes a somewhat

longer pause, and then he would reply. But only when he was sure that I was done and had calmed down again. He then set everything out clearly for me and asked me how it came about that I said this or said that. He'd forgotten about some of the things I'd said and sometimes only I knew about them.

Slowly but surely, everything would become clearer again and I could see what had brought on this outburst. Sometimes it was something my boyfriend had said: a certain comment that reminded me of a time when I wasn't happy with myself and had to face a similar situation. Another time it could be through something that I saw on the television. Sometimes it was simply a picture of a cow – that could upset me. When my last relationship ended, cows were just some of the animals that I had to leave behind. If it was up to me, they would all have come with me!

– Difficulties when making a summary

Despite the fact that I am a very good listener, I don't find it easy to tell someone else about a story that I heard or to summarize a news item that I've just read. I'm no good at telling jokes, either.

It's along the same lines as not being able to express what I want to say; all kinds of thoughts come into my head that have nothing to do with what I'm talking about. I'm too busy looking at how someone is reacting to what I'm saying or wondering if they understand me.

Nowadays I find it much easier. Now I find it easier to think or say: 'read it yourself' or 'look it up on the internet' at a much earlier stage in the conversation. It goes without saying that it all depends on who I'm talking to, but in general I can pass the liability onto the other person. It takes up far too much of my time and energy to worry about it as well.

I now know what I'm able to do and what is too much for me and that is what I focus on.

Sometimes I'm just so keen to convince someone of something that I find myself gasping for breath whilst telling my story. I want to tell my story just like other people would tell it. I like it when it's my turn to speak and I sometimes try too hard to make a good job of telling my story. Luckily, I now know better; I now know that I'm better not to do this.

I now concentrate on doing what I learned to do some time ago and I stick to writing down all that I want to tell on paper. This is the best choice for me.

– Difficulties with putting things into perspective

Through my problems with low self-image, sensitivity to stress and my need for confirmation, it is often very difficult for me to consider stories or situations lightly.

Luckily I've met a lot of friends, acquaintances, therapists

and other professionals who have taught me to look at things from another perspective. My empathy for others developed even further through this, which, at the same time, can occasionally be a disadvantage. I have had to find a happy medium for this – a good balance – and I have to say that I am still working on getting this right.

What I have learned over the past few years is to know, and be able to feel, what my own limits are and to act on this. Now – finally – I sometimes dare to think about myself without immediately thinking about what someone else will think about me. It could be that I lose the odd friendship here and there but these days I find it easier to think: ‘Then so be it.’

As a result of this it seems like I emit a kind of strength through which any possible arguments never actually come to fruition. Clearly, I express myself well in one way or another and people accept this much better than before. Of course it all depends on who I am dealing with at the time. I will never be able to understand some people or know how to get through to them.

Partly thanks to Hypnotherapy and Regression Therapy, I can now quickly process certain situations in my mind much better than before. I’m not always thanked for this: for example, if someone – or an animal – dies, I’ve noticed that some people haven’t yet finished grieving, whereas I’m already busy organising everything for the funeral or whatever has to be done next. I can also quickly see the deceased as a positive image in my thoughts. This is purely my way of dealing with it and how I keep myself strong; otherwise I would just get stuck in the situation and that is not good for me. I know that far

too well!

– Easily Tired

I have to have a little nap every day. The best time for me is between one o'clock and three o'clock in the afternoon, as that still gives me plenty of time to do things in the afternoon. Sometimes, I even take a shower after my sleep so I get the feeling that my day is starting all over again.

What works best for me is to get up early in the morning, really early – before the dew is in the meadows and it is still dark outside. Then I feed the animals, put the coffee on and make sandwiches for my boyfriend to take to work. I then sit down and think about what I'm going to do that day. Do I have an appointment with someone? What time will I have to leave? How am I going to get there? Can I go by bike or should I call a taxi?

After a whole routine of stretching exercises I take a warm shower and finish it with a few blasts of cold water. I then moisturize my whole body with body lotion and style my hair with an inexpensive hair gel. So, that feels good and I'm ready to go again! After a while my hair can get very dry. I then flick the longer strands of hair behind my ears and then it falls into shape on its own. I'm lucky in that I have naturally wavy hair. Once every six weeks I add a bit of blonde to my hair and once in a while I have it cut with a few more layers added so that the waves fall into shape better.

I do a lot to make sure that my day starts well. After I've had a good breakfast – with tea, cappuccino, fruit juice, yogurt with oat muesli and crackers without added sugar – I go for a walk with our dog. I love being out in the fresh air. As summer approaches it starts to get warmer and although I do like sunshine, I'm not that keen on the summer. Mainly because there are more stinging insects around in the summer.

Warm weather is one of the things that makes me tired. I need my little nap earlier than usual, I tend to take short gasps of air when I'm breathing and I breathe through my mouth and leave my mouth open. I need longer to prepare myself for my day because of things like making sure I have water with me when I go anywhere and finding out where the nearest toilets are, for example.

Sometimes I do accept an invitation to go somewhere in the summer months but in general I prefer to stay at home.

I once wrote an article for the internet in which I state that I am never too tired to ride my bike and that is the truth, for sure. I think cycling is a great thing to do and not only that, it's good for my muscles and joints. First thing in the morning, whenever I can, I like to start off with breathing exercises – breathing in through my nose – and I then try to repeat these at various intervals throughout the day. If I still find that I'm gasping for breath, I notice this very quickly as I start to feel very tired. I have to think carefully about how I'm breathing.

Luckily, my days are now much easier to plan and I can live in accordance with my own regular timescales. That

is how I know when it's the best time to take my nap. I really have to stick to this too because if I simply carry on with my work, by seven o'clock in the evening, I am tired out and my eyelids feel heavy.

I have always been like this and in the past I took too much on, so I got tired very easily. I really don't want to have to go through that again so whatever I can do to avoid it – I certainly do it!

– Emotional vulnerability

I cry a lot more than most people. Whenever anyone tells me a sad story, or any story that supplicates any kind of emotion, such as respect for what someone has achieved or compassion, tears always spring to my eyes.

Whenever a situation just gets too much for me, and that can sometimes happen all of a sudden due to being over-sensitive to minor detail – someone talking too loud, someone is angry with me or not everything is said that needed to be said, and it could be that it has nothing to do with me, and sudden changes in behaviour can also get to me – I can then all of a sudden feel so very sad. I don't always have to cry at that moment but then later, when I start to think about why it made me feel so sad, the tears will eventually start to flow.